

LOCAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE EDITION

JANUARY 2012

ENERGY-SAVING LIGHTBULBS • PARK FUN FOR DISABLED • HEALTHY EATING

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

2012: INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF COOPERATIVES

UP FROM THE

ASHES

{ In the wake of the state's worst wildfire season ever,
Texans are coming together to rebuild communities and lives. }

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8 Up From the Ashes

By Jesse Mullins

Photos by Will van Overbeek

Homes. Property. Wildlife and livestock. Across Texas, the devastating wildfires of 2011 consumed all in their paths. But Texans are pitching in, with neighbors helping neighbors, and electric co-ops leading the charge to rebuild communities and lives.

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By Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

Photos by Will van Overbeek

Morgan's Wonderland in San Antonio—billed as the world's first ultra-accessible family fun park—offers something special for everybody. And we do mean everybody.

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Remembering Columbia: Museum Honors Astronauts' Heroic Lives

Observations by Suzi Sands

Field of Daydreams: Planting Seeds for Spring



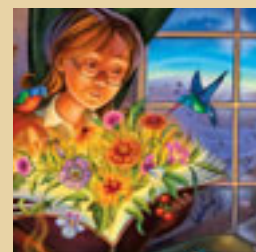
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TEXAS CO-OP POWER

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Inspired by a mythological romance, this stunning 170-carat amethyst bead necklace is yours for the taking!

She was Amethyst, a maiden devoted to virtue. He was Dionysus, the notorious Greek god of intoxication and revelry. He loved her, but she wanted to wait for someone more suitable. He was a god, used to getting what he wanted. The chase was on. But once Diana saw that Amethyst was serious about keeping her heart pure, the goddess transformed her into a statue of perfect stone. Dionysus stopped partying for a moment and wept. He spilled his wine and infused the statue with the rich violet color we now know as amethyst.

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POWERtalk

Letters from Texas Co-op Power Readers

HEAVENLY BRISKET

Jeff Siegel's article on Texas barbecue was well done; however, he did not mention the heavenly brisket that has been served at Black's Barbecue in Lockhart since 1932.

J.D. KINDRED

Bandera Electric Cooperative

I lived in La Grange four decades ago and went back last year to Prause Meat Market. They haven't changed a bit—thank God. If you go there for lunch, travel 15 more miles down State Highway 71, southeast, to Ellinger and pick up some authentic Czech kolaches at Hruska's. They use quality Eckermann sausage, which makes all the difference in a good kolache. Czech it out.

MICHAEL BURMEISTER

Pedernales Electric Cooperative

BRAVO, FIREFIGHTERS

Great article ["Fighting Fires," November 2011] on the aerial firefighters who helped so valiantly to stop the Bastrop fires. My grandson is a career fireman in the Houston area. Thank you for honoring these brave people who risk their lives to save Texas. They are amazing.

DANA GOODALE

Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative

STAGE DELIGHT

Years ago, I was asked to be a last-minute fill-in for the back-stage crew of the play "The Diary of Anne Frank" put on by

the Jasper Community Theatre. Having exactly NO stage experience, I wasn't sure about accepting, but when I was assured that I would be dressed in black and working between scenes when the lights were low, I decided to take the chance. It was one of the best experiences of my life! Thanks, Charles Boisseau, for an actor's view of small-town theater ["Stage Plight," November 2011] and for bringing so many wonderful memories back to me.

KELLY MARBERRY

Jasper-Newton Electric Cooperative

OH, CHRISTMAS TREES!

I have just finished reading my November 2011 issue, and the last page ["Oh, Christmas Tree"] was the best! My granddaughter and I have gone to Mr and Ms Trees for the last five years. I still tell the story of our first visit, when Brianna was just 4:

We picked our measuring stick and a saw. After wandering over all the tree lanes, we finally picked a tree. She took about three swipes with the saw and then asked me for help. We were making some progress, when along came the young men who were bigger and stronger.

Then Brianna told them of her unwavering faith in me—her grandmother she thinks can do "anything." This being a direct quote to the offer of

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help: "My grammy and I got this!" I was so shocked, it took me a few minutes to sort out how to handle it. We did keep trying, and she came to the conclusion that maybe some help would be good! The next year, I firmly instructed her on what to say when help was offered—THANK YOU!

JAN HOLLOWAY

Navarro County Electric Cooperative

CAMP HEARNE: IMPORTANT HISTORY

The article on Camp Hearne ["Former German POW At Home in Texas," November 2011] brings back an important part of history. For me, the story brought back childhood memories of other prisoners. Living in Pampa in the upper Panhandle before beginning grade school, I remember prisoners of war [POWs] coming down our alley behind the house. Their work seemed to be cleaning the alleys. Not knowing their background, I assume they were kept at the old Pampa Army Air Field, but there was also a German POW camp at McLean, near Pampa.

A better-known location in the Amarillo area was the camp southeast of Hereford. Italian POWs from that camp made wood carvings, painted murals and installed stained-glass windows at St. Mary's Catholic Church in nearby Umbarger.

BILL LIBBY

Taylor Electric Cooperative

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



Second Religion of Texas: Barbecue

I really enjoyed your November 2011 issue, which was centered around the second religion of Texas—barbecue. My son in London is going to get a copy to remind him of one of the best reasons we live here!

Andy Hardin, CoServ Electric

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Texas Electric Cooperatives
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Illuminated Thinking

Read the label, learn your lumens and light up your world.

By Suzanne Haberman

Shoppers have to rethink the way they pick out lightbulbs.

As of January 1, the most common lightbulbs that Americans use are required to be 25 percent more efficient under standards set by Congress in 2007. That means retailers are stocking their shelves with a selection of energy-efficient—and perhaps unfamiliar—alternatives. And new terminology is appearing on the packaging: The word “lumens” describes the brightness of a lightbulb, and the word “watts” describes how much electricity it consumes.

Under the Energy Independence and Security Act, most lightbulbs must use less electricity while producing the same amount of light that consumers are used to getting. The lighting standards, which are being phased in from 2012 to 2014, do not ban incandescent or any specific bulb type. Certain specialty bulbs are exempt from the new regulations.

Traditional 100-watt incandescent lightbulbs, which produce about 1,600 lumens, do not meet the efficiency standards. Traditional incandescent bulbs lose up to 90 percent of their energy as heat. In their place, consumers will find choices—such as newer incandescent bulbs—that use 72 watts or less to provide a comparable amount of light.

After stores sell out of 100-watt incandescent lightbulbs, they won't be restocked. Similar standards will phase out traditional 75-watt incandescent bulbs as of 2013 and traditional 40- and 60-watt incandescent bulbs as of 2014.

To help consumers understand what they're buying, the Federal Trade Commission is requiring lightbulb packaging to have lighting facts labels—much like nutritional information labels on food. The lighting facts list a bulb's lumens, estimated usage cost per year and the color of light it produces. While the variety of lightbulbs and terminology

might seem daunting at first, the new labels are meant to help shoppers buy bulbs that suit their needs and save them money on their electric bills.

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) estimates that replacing 15 traditional incandescent bulbs in a home with energy-efficient alternatives could save consumers about \$50 a year. Although energy-efficient bulbs are typically more expensive, the energy savings over the lifetime of the bulb often makes up for the initial cost. And the newer bulbs typically last significantly longer, bringing more savings, according to the DOE.

Three main bulbs have entered the spotlight as energy-efficient replacements: halogen incandescent bulbs, compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs) and light-emitting diodes (LEDs).

Suzanne Haberman, staff writer

Visit www.energysavers.gov for more information.



HALOGEN INCANDESCENT

CFL

LED

SHOPPING FOR LUMENS

To replace a traditional incandescent lightbulb with an energy-saving bulb that produces the same amount of light, check the lumens, a measure of light emitted. Here are some equivalents: 100-watt: 1,600 lumens; 75-watt: 1,100 lumens; 60-watt: 800 lumens; 40-watt: 450 lumens.

PHOTOS: GE LIGHTING, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, it costs the average consumer about \$4.80 a year to operate a traditional incandescent lightbulb. By comparison, here's a look at the estimated savings offered by other major bulb types now lining retail shelves.

HALOGEN INCANDESCENT

Estimated Annual Cost:* \$3.50

Energy Savings:** 25 percent

Hours:*** 3,000 to 4,000

Dimmable: Yes

How It Works: Electricity passes through a metal filament until heat makes it glow, and a gas-filled, coated capsule surrounds the filament to keep it hot with less energy.

ENERGY STAR CFL

Estimated Annual Cost:* \$1.20

Energy Savings:** 75 percent

Hours:*** 8,000 to 10,000

Dimmable: Some

How It Works: Electricity passes through a gas-filled tube to produce ultraviolet light. A fluorescent coating inside the tube, phosphor, makes the light visible.

ENERGY STAR LED

Estimated Annual Cost:* \$1

Energy Savings:** 75 to 80 percent

Hours:*** 35,000 to 50,000****

Dimmable: Yes

How It Works: Light-emitting diodes are small light sources illuminated by the passage of electrons through semiconductor material.

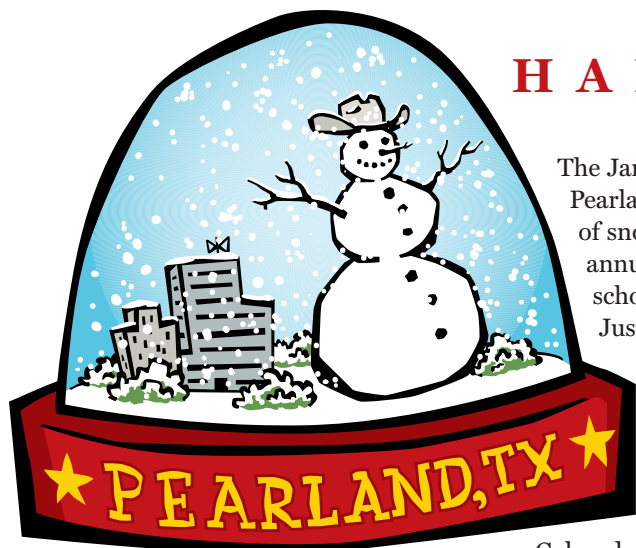
* To operate 60-watt bulbs, based on 2 hours/day of use

** Over traditional incandescent

*** Varies by specific lamp type

**** High-power white LEDs

Sources: U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



HAPPENINGS

The January 28 weather forecast for Pearland calls for a quarter-million pounds of snow—all in one day—thanks to an annual event that transforms an old high school campus into a winter wonderland.

Just like the magic of waking up to a snow-covered landscape—which Pearland, south of Houston, rarely does—**WINTERFEST** makes it possible for some kids (and adults) to create their first snow angels.

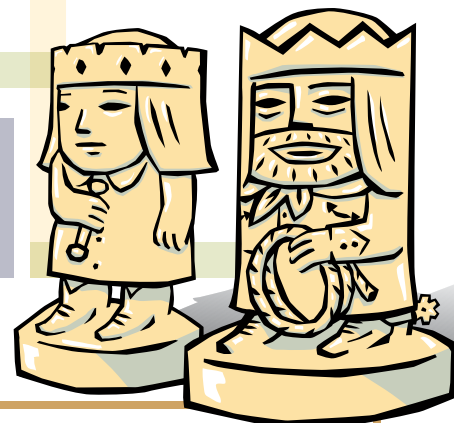
The snow comes courtesy of a Colorado company that feeds ice blocks into chipping machines on-site. Then, imaginations run wild on a snowy playground featuring downhill rides on inner tubes. For the less adventurous, there's the Recycle Snowman Contest in which competitors use recyclable materials provided by the city to build snowmen that will never melt. For more information, visit www.pearlandparks.com or call (281) 412-8900.

From Art shows to Zucchini festivals, you'll find hundreds of happenings all across the state at TexasCoopPower.com.

WHO KNEW?

CHESS CAPITAL OF TEXAS: BROWNSVILLE

In 2003, the Legislature crowned Brownsville the Chess Capital of Texas. Brownsville Independent School District students at all grade levels have won 22 total national championships and more than 40 state championships—45 of the district's 48 schools have chess teams. For the past three years, The University of Texas at Brownsville/Texas Southmost College has finished in the top three in the President's Cup—the Final Four of college chess.



2012

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF COOPERATIVES

The United Nations has proclaimed 2012 the International Year of Cooperatives. There are an estimated 1 billion co-op members worldwide, including 42 million who belong to electric cooperatives.

CO-OP PEOPLE

I Do: The Cooperative Spirit at Its Finest

BY ASHLEY CLARY-CARPENTER

Clad in jeans, a work shirt and scuffed, dirty boots, Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative (BEC) Apprentice I Lineman Jeffrey Bolding walked his bride, Brittany, outside the Bastrop County courthouse on September 10. As Brittany's wedding gown billowed around her, the lineman dipped her for one last kiss, for now, before heading back to work in his crew truck.

This is not the story of a workaholic. This is the story of newlyweds—and a lineman's dedication.

On this Saturday, Jeffrey was helping restore power to those affected by the nearby Union Chapel fire. The previous weekend, when the Bastrop County Complex fire broke out, the couple had postponed their wedding, scheduled for September 10.

"The wedding didn't mean much after the fires happened. It wasn't about us; it was about Bastrop," Jeffrey, 25, said. "That's a decision we made as a couple; Brittany knows the job and what comes with it. And I'm grateful for that."

But then, about 24 hours before what would have been their wedding day, the couple made a decision: It was back on.



SARAH REAL, BLUEBONNET ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

The 22-year-old Brittany (whose maiden name is Bojczuk) liked the numbers—9-10-11—as an anniversary date, and many of their family members were in town as fire-recovery volunteers. "I sent out emails, I made phone calls, and they all showed up," she said.

Family and BEC employees involved in the ceremony—including Jeffrey's brother Danny, also a BEC lineman—were "gung ho," as Jeffrey put it, about the change in plans. "That day, I told the guy in charge, 'Hey, I gotta break loose for about 30 minutes to get married,'" said Jeffrey, who used his lunch break for the 15-minute ceremony.

Bastrop County Court at Law Judge Benton Eskew (also a family friend) left his volunteer work to wed the couple in front of about 50 friends and family members, including their 16-month-old son, Brody. After "I do," it was back to work.

"It's not really what I had expected, but it all fell into place," said Brittany. "We had a home to come home to, so we didn't want the focus to be on us. We wanted it to be on Bastrop and the community."

All in a day's work: Lineman Jeffrey Bolding sweeps his bride, Brittany, off her feet before returning to work to help restore power in a fire-stricken zone.

Ashley Clary-Carpenter, field editor

Send suggestions for a future Co-op People to editor@TexasCoopPower.com.

UP FROM THE ASHES

After a year of unprecedented wildfire destruction, lessons have been learned, lives are being rebuilt, and Texans are coming together to build stronger communities than ever.

BY JESSE MULLINS • PHOTOS BY WILL VAN OVERBEEK



As if in defiance of the stark landscape of ash and blackened tree trunks, a house frame of fresh timber takes shape on Cardinal Drive, where nearly every home was destroyed by the Bastrop County Complex wildfire.

When Larry McClintock and his 20-year-old grandson Anthony returned home to Paige from Austin, where they had gotten a flat tire fixed, they bounced the repaired tire from the pickup bed and rolled it to a tree trunk, propping it there next to the house. Then they went inside to relax for just 10 minutes before mounting the tire on the car from which it came.

That was on September 4. Little did they know on that blustery Sunday that they wouldn't need to mount the tire at

all. That they'd be fleeing the scene in 10 minutes, and almost immediately after that, the tire would be ablaze and would burst, the tree would be on fire, the car would be an inferno so hot that its tempered glass would melt, and their home would be reduced to ashes, just like the home next door, just like every home on their stretch of Cardinal Drive and more than 1,600 homes in surrounding communities.

They all went up in a sky-blotting nimbus of billowing ash in a wildfire so

big it was visible from outer space.

With sirens blaring, units from the sheriff's office and fire department burst upon the neighborhood. The McClintocks, who were relaxing indoors, were unprepared for the scenes of chaos when they went to the door.

The officers "were using their loudspeakers, saying, 'Evacuate immediately—your lives are in danger!'" said Larry's wife, Peggy McClintock.

"It was terrifying," she said. "Totally unbelievable. We didn't even have time to get a toothbrush. When we went out on our front porch, the fire was directly across the street from our house, in our neighbor's backyard."

The fire was devastating in its fury.

"The lady from the sheriff's department pulled into our driveway," Peggy said. "I told her we had to get our dogs. She told us to just turn them loose. I insisted we had to get them."

The McClintocks gathered their two dogs and hurried into the Ford pickup, turning left with the flow of traffic. There was only one way out—south on Cardinal, which intersects with State Highway 21 northeast of Bastrop. The narrow, twisting, forest-hugged, normally lightly trafficked two-lane road was already jammed with vehicles. What should have taken but a few minutes took 15 to 20. "You were seeing all this smoke and fire," Peggy said. "You could hear propane tanks blowing up."

Complicating matters was an 18-wheeler truck cab, sans trailer, blocking the road as its driver tried to turn around to head south. As other drivers honked their horns, the procedure seemed to take forever, Peggy said. Finally, the truck was moving, with trees ablaze all around.

"When we got to the end of Cardinal, we stopped, got out of the truck, and watched our subdivision burn," Peggy said.

Put to the Test

The Bastrop County Complex fire, which made national headlines, consumed more than 34,000 acres. Other wildfires have been larger, but the Bastrop blaze destroyed the most homes, making it the single-most destructive fire in Texas history.

Nor have the losses been confined to Bastrop. As of November, one year after what was to become Texas' worst-ever

wildfire season began, more than 4 million acres had been scorched—more land area than is found in Connecticut.

Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative, which serves the Bastrop region, was put to the test as perhaps no cooperative had been previously.

Bluebonnet Chief Operating Officer Matt Bentke said the immensity of the event struck home very quickly when employees had to evacuate the co-op's headquarters just as the wildfire was sweeping its service area. Later, they would find that the building itself was spared, but at the building's perimeter, the burn zone went "360 degrees—all the way around," Bentke said.

Eight Bluebonnet employees lost their homes to fire. "Some were actually working that [Sunday] afternoon, and that evening, while they knew their homes were burning," Bentke said. "They never missed a beat—just worked hand in hand with the rest of our employees, doing the things that had to be done."

While the office staff evacuated to the co-op's alternate control center, Bluebonnet field crews were working side by side with firefighters and emergency response teams.

"They were de-energizing lines out in front of the fire, to make it safe for everyone trying to evacuate and for those trying to fight the fire," Bentke said.

When Bluebonnet was finally allowed into the burn zone—and that was not until three days later—the hands-on restoration effort began in earnest. There were 1,000 poles to replace, 56 miles of line and—hardest of all—252 miles of right-of-way to clear of debris. Some 400 workers were in the field beginning that Wednesday, most of them from outside the region.

Bentke summed up what he and Bluebonnet have learned from this event. "When faced with such challenges," he said, "people have an innate ability to set aside personal needs and go beyond what is normal and what is expected, all for the benefit of others. And those others could be people they may never know or ever expect to receive thanks from."

Bringing Out the Best in People

The Bastrop County Complex fire came close on the heels of another one, the late-August blaze that swept much of the Possum Kingdom Lake area. An



Derick Zwerneman, left, outreach director at Celebration Church, and Mike Sattler of Austin Disaster Relief Network load donated goods into vehicles of Bastrop County wildfire victims.



Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative employee Theresa Kuhn (bottom row, holding her grandbaby Abigail) didn't hesitate: When she learned that the home of co-worker Susan Norman—like Kuhn, a senior member services representative for the co-op—had been destroyed by fire, Kuhn offered her family's rent house to the Norman family. Kuhn's daughter, Virginia Little, moved out of the rent home and in with her mom, freeing up space. **TOP ROW, left to right:** Cassie Miller, Dusty Norman, Charlie Hendrix, Susan Norman, Nicholas Miller, Matthew Miller and Brittany Hendrix. **BOTTOM ROW, left to right:** Alyssa Little, Raymond Kuhn, Sasha Kuhn, Theresa Kuhn, Abigail Little, Virginia Little and Ivor Lawhon.

earlier, larger fire in April had swept through the same area served by United Cooperative Services (UCS).

Marty Haight, senior vice president of communications and public relations at UCS, said the Possum Kingdom area lost 400 poles in April and 120 poles in August. About 30 UCS-serviced structures—mostly homes—were consumed in the August fire, Haight said.

The August wildfire, a stunning conflagration called the 101 Ranch Fire, started on ranchland outside the community of Possum Kingdom but raced northwest and jumped State Highway 16 before sweeping into the upscale residential enclave known as The Cliffs, overlooking Possum Kingdom Lake.

The flames were so hot—firefighters estimated the temperature at 2,500 to



LEFT: Roger Wolfe, United Cooperative Services foreman for the Possum Kingdom Lake office, led restoration efforts after both fires. As a 30-year resident of the area, Wolfe knew most of the members who were depending on him and his crews to safely restore their power. **RIGHT:** In August, Grafard volunteer firefighter Eddie Shelton lost his home and everything in it to a Possum Kingdom wildfire, even as he fought to save others' homes.

3,000 degrees—that homes were igniting even ahead of the wind-driven fire line. Cedars across the tree-clad plateau were exploding into flames. Observers estimated that some of the flames leapt as high as 100 feet into the air.

The earlier, grim experiences of April, which fetched seven neighboring co-ops to UCS' side, provided invaluable lessons. "One of the most impressive things to me was seeing [in August] how our line crews knew just exactly what to do," Haught said. "They assessed the situation, developed a strategy and went right to work. It was extremely inspiring."

The day after the fire, UCS deployed 50 employees into the burn zone, and all power was fully restored by 4 p.m. the following day, September 1. The April power restoration, by comparison, took nine days.

"A local real estate company, Pondera Properties, and the Lake Country Sun newspaper did a masterful job coordinating information for the community," Haught said. "They were instrumental in broadcasting our

restoration efforts to our members."

Other local organizations also rushed to help, including the Possum Kingdom Chamber of Commerce, which served meals to firefighters and line crews.

"I honestly think Possum Kingdom will be even stronger in the future than it was before. The people really came together, and we're grateful to be a small part of such an inspiring community," Haught said.

Fredda Buckner, general manager at Big Country Electric Cooperative, oversaw her co-op's restoration efforts in Fisher and Kent counties after a widespread April wildfire that threatened the towns of Rotan and Roby, the co-op's headquarters location.

Dubbed the Cooper Mountain Ranch fire, after its starting point, the blaze started moving toward Rotan on April 14, before a wind shift took it southeast, toward Roby, some 10 miles distant. As the fire came closer, things got frantic, Buckner said. "There was smoke in the air. You could drive out from town and see the blazes.

"We spent the 15th preparing to evacuate our headquarters, until, by the grace of God, the wind changed again, and the fire didn't get to Roby," Buckner said.

It would not be until April 22 that firefighters proclaimed the fire "under control," and the task of restoration could begin. Fully 162,625 acres, mostly ranchland, were consumed—almost five times as many acres as the Bastrop County Complex fire would destroy.

"It burned pasture grass, fences and animals," Buckner said. "We lost barns. Not many homes. About 350 poles were destroyed in that fire. A lot of oil-field flow lines were destroyed, and a lot of people sold their cattle because there was no grass and no fences."

But then came a gradual but growing resurgence of energy and effort, both within Big Country Electric, which has lost approximately 500 poles to wildfires, and within the communities at large.

"People were pitching in, gathering cattle for each other, finding temporary placements for the animals," Buckner said. "The first night—the night they

U.S. GOV'T GOLD AT-COST

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Jackie Fewell, left, and Michelle Stauber, realtors with Pondera Properties, used the company's blog and Facebook page to keep Possum Kingdom property owners updated during the fires.



Anthony McClintock, left, his grandmother, Peggy McClintock, and his mother, Brandy McClintock, lost everything in the Bastrop County wildfire. Peggy echoes the sentiment of many whose homes were destroyed: 'We will go back.'

were evacuating Rotan—the churches in Roby opened up their doors. The Red Cross came in and brought cots. People were bringing food. They were coordinating volunteers who were opening their homes to evacuees from Rotan.

"The guys worked very long hours each day," Buckner said. "They'd come in around 10 at night and rest until daybreak. In the earliest going, some of our people worked around the clock, while our other people were getting them food and assisting any way they could. A disaster really brings out the best in people."

Generosity and Compassion

On October 4, a month after the Bastrop County Complex inferno, the soccer grounds adjacent to Bastrop High School were turned into a distribution center for fire victims. Coordinated by Austin Disaster Relief Network, a cooperative effort of about 100 area churches, the event embodied generosity and compassion from thousands of contributors and volunteers.

It took an 18-wheeler truck and trailer to lug all the donated goods. From 5 p.m. until well after dark, a seemingly endless line of vehicles

pulled through the circle as volunteers heaped commodities, clothing and other supplies into the cars or tumbled them into pickup beds.

Organizers stockpiled three warehouses full of donations that came pouring in after news of the Bastrop County fire went national. The warehouse space was donated rent-free by area businesses.

Mike Sattler, an event coordinator, said fire victims were in disbelief when they saw what awaited them. "Some of them were crying," he said. "It was almost like Christmas. We were filling everyone's car with stuff. We wished we could've done more, but they couldn't hold it all anyways."

There looked to be enough groceries to accommodate the nightly restocking in a supermarket. And the relief network was able to transport "food, pillows, blankets, towels, cleaning products and supplies, comforters, bedding, shoes, jeans, shirts," Sattler said.

'We Will Go Back'

Peggy McClintock was among the fire victims to go through the line that evening in Bastrop. She picked up food, water, bedding, toiletries, towels and other goods.

Peggy acknowledges that she and her family, who were uninsured and live on a fixed income, are hard-pressed by the circumstances, and the weight of the disaster still hangs heavy on them. But she is equally emphatic that they will find a mobile home—a used one will be the best they can possibly do—and again take their crack at Cardinal Drive.

Why?

"Because it's home!" Peggy said, almost choking on the words. "We've been there for more than 30 years. Even though it's burned to the ground, I don't feel comfortable anywhere else. We broke our backs clearing that land. There was nothing but trees on top of trees. Stickers, brush, you could not imagine. You literally could not see onto the property because of the underbrush."

"We are determined to go back," she said quietly. "We will go back."

Jesse Mullins, a freelance writer, lives in Abilene.

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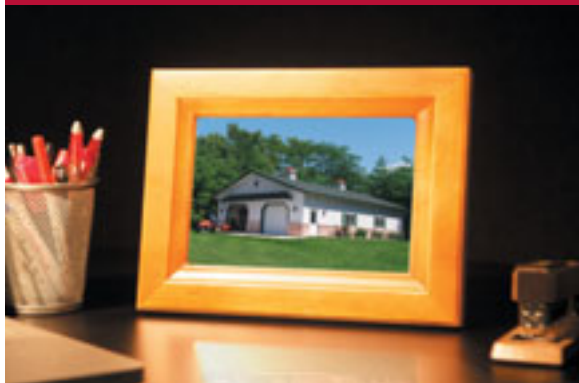
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The Wonder of It

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*San Antonio Theme Park
Offers Something Special for
Everybody ... EVERYBODY*

**BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS
PHOTOS BY WILL VAN OVERBEEK**



TOP: Kylee Roberts of San Antonio sits like a princess on one of the fantastical creatures on this one-of-a-kind carousel engineered to include adaptive animals for guests incapable of sitting upright. **LEFT:** The wheelchair is no impediment to fun for Jonathon Belz, 17, who made the trip from Sulphur Springs with his mother, Candi, for the first carousel ride of his life.

Side by side, Sophia O'Neal and her little brother, Josiah, splashed their hands in the elevated pool at Water Works, an interactive play area at Morgan's Wonderland in San Antonio. Intrigued, Sophia, 8, reached for a plastic tube and attached it to a gurgling contraption of pipes. From beneath his blue gimme cap, Josiah watched. But not for long.

"I'm ready to go!" the 6-year-old announced loudly. "I'm going to the playground!" Then he spun around in his motorized wheelchair and took off.

At that point, most mothers would have panicked. Instead, Amy O'Neal calmly smiled.

"Morgan's Wonderland is such a great place," she said. "Everything is completely accessible to Josiah. He feels like this park was made just for him."

"My other kids have fun here, too," added Amy, who traveled from Mississippi to visit family, "and I know they're all safe."

Billed as the world's first ultra-accessible family fun park, Morgan's Wonderland is a 25-acre amusement park that's designed to be fun for everyone, yet specially built to accommodate children and adults with special cognitive and physical needs. Guests can ride in open-air railcars pulled by a miniature train; cruise in an off-road vehicle around a twisting track; pilot a remote-controlled pirate ship in a mini lagoon; and explore wavy slides, rocking seesaws and chiming music makers at colorful, shaded playscapes with cushy, rubberized surfaces.

Inside the Sensory Village, they can stand in front of a camera, point to temperatures on a map, and see themselves ham it up as a weather forecaster on television. In the Village Market, they can shop for carrots, apples, canned green beans and other make-believe (plastic) groceries.

Since opening in April 2010, more than 200,000 people from all 50 states and 30-plus countries have passed through the park's gates. Many make special trips to the Alamo City so someone they love can experience something as simple as riding a carousel, likely for the first time.

"Last year, a family from Florida purchased an oversized van just so they could drive here," former General Manager Dave Force said. "The parents told us that at last they had a place where they could take their two sons, who both have wheelchairs and oxygen tanks."

Monumental Moment

In 2006, while on a family vacation, then 12-year-old Morgan Hartman longed to throw a ball with other kids in a hotel swimming pool. Morgan, who has a moderate cognitive delay, couldn't ask to join in. As she inched closer, the other children, uncomfortable and unsure of what to do, climbed out of the pool. Nearby, her father, Gordon, watched as the scene played out to its usual ending. But this time, the sadness in his daughter's eyes moved him more deeply than it ever had before.

That "monumental" experience, as he calls it now, also motivated him.

"Morgan was simply trying to integrate into their play," he recalled. "I suddenly thought, 'There's got to be a place where we can all play and feel comfortable.' Because of her limitations, Morgan can't go to theme parks that are crowded, rushed and loud. So I decided I'd search for a place that might be close to what she needed."

After several investigative trips, Hartman—a former homebuilder turned philanthropist—found nothing like he'd envisioned. "In January 2007, I returned home to San Antonio, determined that we would build a place that was ultra accessible," Hartman said. He and his wife, Maggie, had already co-founded the Gordon Hartman Family Foundation, which helps Bexar County-area nonprofit agencies assist children and adults with special cognitive and physical needs.

"I thought that if we could do that," Gordon Hartman said of building a theme park, "then we'd help bring down those barriers I saw that day in the pool."

When Hartman hosted a public meeting in San Antonio to gauge interest in his idea, he assumed he'd only need a few chairs. "I was stunned when hundreds of people showed up!" he said. "I learned so much from the grassroots input we received. They told us that they wanted a safe environment where their special-needs children could feel comfortable and not rushed to enjoy the attractions. Within a year, we also raised \$15 million in private and public donations just from the general idea of a special-needs theme park."

Moving forward, Hartman and his team solicited more suggestions from therapists, teachers, doctors, caregivers and parents. For one year, architects, engineers and graphic artists—with no prior experience in designing amusement parks—fine-tuned a site plan and more than 20 attractions.

"I wanted people who were passionate and could think outside the box," Hartman explained. Another year went into building the \$34 million park, located in an abandoned quarry in northeast San Antonio. On April 10, 2010, more than 7,000 people joined Hartman in celebrating the grand opening of his daughter's namesake—Morgan's Wonderland.

Smiles Everywhere

At age 17, Jonathon Belz of Sulphur Springs had never ridden a carousel. But that was about to change. "He's going to have a lot of firsts today!" exclaimed his mother, Candi Belz, who watched while a host securely strapped Jonathon's wheelchair into a dragon-crested chariot. Then Candi and daughter Shellbie, 14, straddled galloping steeds behind him. Lilting pipe-organ music tinkled as the carousel, adorned with white lights and gilded mirrors, slowly began to twirl. In unison, the trio bobbed up and down on their seats.

"Sure beats the school bus any day, right, Bubba?" Candi



TOP: Sylvia Perez of San Antonio enjoys a smooth dive down a slide of tickling rollers.

LEFT: Andrew Lewis of Houston delights in the colorful moving parts of this playscape. The park's playground equipment is designed for individuals with special cognitive and physical needs, and the shaded play area has a rubberized surface for comfort and safety.



SAFETY FIRST: Radio frequency identification wristbands keep guests safe at Morgan's Wonderland. Data, such as names and email addresses, keys everyone to their group. If separated, guests can simply swipe their band at a location station, and the screen's map shows where they are in the park. The wristbands also allow guests to email souvenir images and photos to themselves.

sang out to her son. "What do you think? Is it fun?" In response, Jonathon flashed a toothy grin and waved his arms.

Uniquely designed for Morgan's Wonderland, the old-fashioned-style carousel sits flush with the ground so guests don't have to step up. In addition to several wheelchair chariots, a colorful menagerie of zoo-animal seats and benches accommodate riders who can't sit upright or who require a caregiver next to them.

Meanwhile, across the park, Josiah was eating a snack at the shaded Sand Circle, where other kids dug in the sand with plastic shovels, toy trucks and accessible excavators. "I'm going to go swing!" he suddenly announced. With his mom in tow, Josiah headed for the swing sets.

From an array of traditional and adaptive swings, the little boy made a beeline for one specially made for a wheelchair. With Amy's help, two park hosts carefully eased his chair up a



short ramp. Then the hosts secured it on a steel platform suspended by heavy chains. Back and forth, they rocked the swing while Josiah relaxed. Now and then, his eyelids closed briefly.

"The swings are one of his favorite things here," Amy said. "He almost fell asleep in one when we visited in March. I get so much joy bringing him here because he can feel normal. It's very distressing as a parent when you go to a place and have to say, 'No, baby, you can't do that.' But Josiah always handles it well. He's a happy kid who dreams of walking someday."

Fun for All

Force, the park's former general manager who now is serving as a consultant for pending marine-life parks overseas, recalled how skeptics doubted whether an accessible park could be designed, much less built. "When we said we wanted a carousel with no ride restrictions, everyone said we couldn't," he said. "Where they saw barriers, we saw challenges. Now everyone who rides our carousel has the same up-and-down experience. That's the whole idea behind Morgan's Wonderland."

"We're trying to teach inclusive behavior here," he continued. "Of our paid and volunteer staff, approximately 20 percent have special needs. We want everyone to play—and work—together and overcome barriers. Our highest compliment is when someone says that Morgan's Wonderland doesn't look like a special-needs park."

That it's a special place can be confirmed by the countless touching stories shared by visitors.

"One woman in her 50s swung here for the first time," Force said. "She was surprised to feel her stomach do a 'little flippy thing' when she went back and forth. For the first time, a grandfather in a wheelchair was able to push his grandchild down a slide. Another family told us this is the only place where they can go as a family in one vehicle."

"All those little things don't change the rotation of the Earth," he added. "But they make a difference in those people's lives. When you see that happening every day, that's Morgan's Wonderland!"

Sheryl Smith-Rodgers, frequent contributor

If You Go ...

HOURS: Seasonal, open March through December

RESERVATIONS REQUESTED: (210) 637-3434; www.morganswonderland.com

ADMISSION: Special-needs guests, free; anyone accompanying special-needs guests, \$10; general admission (under 2 free), \$15 (no stroller or wheelchair rentals available)

FOOD AND BEVERAGES: Guests may bring their own and eat in shaded picnic area; no storage area for ice chests; on-site concession stand, vending machines.

PARKING: Free

TOP: Sylvia Castro of San Antonio gently glides her son, Miguel, 17, on a swing specially constructed to accommodate a wheelchair. **LEFT:** Miguel gives a lift to Olivia Charles, 4. **RIGHT:** Amy O'Neal and son, Josiah, 6, from Collins, Mississippi, are return visitors to Morgan's Wonderland. "I get so much joy from bringing him here because he can feel normal," Amy says.

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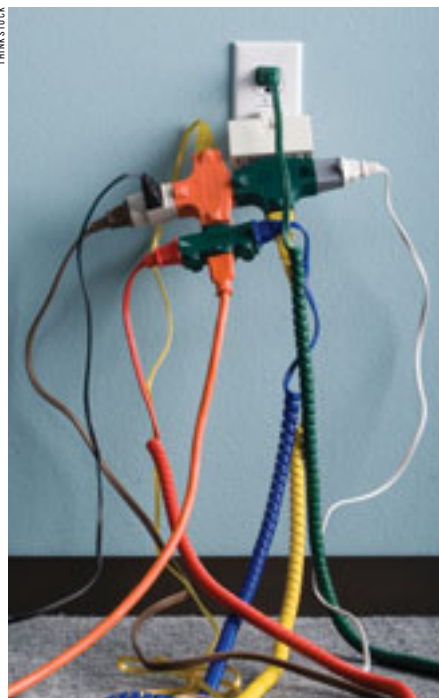
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Put Electrical Safety at Top of Resolutions List

Protecting your family from electrical shocks, tripping hazards and house fires is easier to do than losing 20 pounds or quitting smoking. So make it New Year's resolution No. 1.

Here are 10 simple ways to keep that resolution:

1. INSPECT YOUR OUTLETS. Loose-fitting plugs can surprise someone



Look familiar? If so, it's time to call an electrician to have additional outlets installed.

with a shock or start a fire. If your wall plate is broken, replace it so wires won't be exposed. And insert plastic safety caps into unused outlets if your family includes young children.

2. MAKE PEACE WITH PLUGS. If a plug doesn't comfortably fit into an outlet, don't force it. Try a different outlet. And never remove the grounding pin (third prong) so a three-prong plug will fit into a two-prong outlet.

3. BE CAREFUL WITH CORDS. They're not designed to last forever. Toss frayed or cracked cords. And never run them under carpets or rugs, where

they would have to endure constant pounding that could rip them or wear them out—exposing you to fire from overheated wires.

4. PACK UP EXTENSION CORDS.

They're fine for connecting strands of holiday lights together and helping decorations reach plugs during December. But come January 1, pack them up and store them. Extension cords are designed for temporary use.

5. WATCH YOUR WATTAGE. The light-bulbs in your lamps and overhead fixtures should match the specifications on those fixtures. A bulb with wattage that is too high can overheat.

6. FIND NO FAULT. Ground-fault circuit interrupters, or GFCIs, are a must in every outlet in the kitchen, bathrooms, laundry, garage and outdoors. If water could touch electricity, you need GFCIs on every outlet in the room.

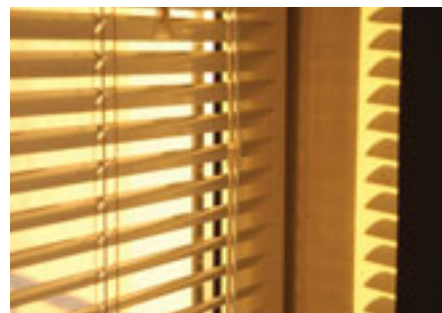
7. FUSS WITH YOUR FUSES. If you don't know whether your fuses are the right size for the circuit they're protecting, call an electrician, who can clue you in.

8. ADJUST APPLIANCES. If a circuit trips every time you plug in your hair dryer, or if your coffeemaker has ever shocked you when you plugged it in, you either have faulty appliances or an overloaded circuit. An electrician can identify and solve your problem.

9. WATCH THE WIRING. Faulty electrical wires start many house fires. If you hear popping or sizzling sounds behind the walls or if light switches feel hot, do not use those fixtures or switches until a licensed electrician has replaced them.

10. GET WHAT YOU NEED. Unless you live in a brand-new house, you probably are using more electricity than the builder ever dreamed you would. Call an electrician to determine whether your home needs more electrical capacity.

Source: Energy Education Council



Letting the sun shine in can help you save energy and lower heating costs.

Quick Tips To Lower Heating Bills

You don't have to shiver through the winter or wear your winter coat to bed just to save a few bucks on heating this winter. Here are five ways to lower your energy bill and stay comfortable, too:

1. TURN THE THERMOSTAT DOWN BY JUST ONE DEGREE. The U.S. Department of Energy estimates that you can save 3 percent on your heating bill for every degree you set your thermostat back during the winter—as long as you leave it there.

2. TURN OFF EXHAUST FANS IN THE KITCHEN AND BATHROOM as soon as the smell or steam is gone. It doesn't take long for those fans to blow all of the warm air out of your house.

3. CLOSE THE FIREPLACE DAMPER when you're not burning a fire. An open damper is a hole in your house that sucks heated air out and invites cold winter air in.

4. MOVE FURNITURE AND RUGS AWAY FROM HEATING VENTS so air can circulate freely. That will make your heating system's work a lot easier.

5. OPEN CURTAINS OR BLINDS ON SOUTH-FACING WINDOWS on sunny days so the sun's warmth can radiate into the house. Close them at night to help trap that heat indoors.

Weigh Options Before Installing Heating and Cooling System

DEAR JIM: My old heating and cooling system must be replaced. With high energy costs and future energy price volatility, how can I determine the best type to go with? —*Jack W.*

DEAR JACK: It can make economic, environmental and lifestyle sense to switch to an entirely different type of heating source for your home. The costs of fuels, such as natural gas, propane and electricity, have shifted dramatically over the past decade. Many new heating systems last 20 years or more, so with wide variations in fuel costs, long-term estimated operating costs and paybacks are not always reliable.

Historically, electricity prices have been the most stable of those fuels and will probably continue that way. For homes heated with electricity, air-source or geothermal heat pumps make good sense because they can heat, as well as cool, your house efficiently.

A standard air-source heat pump is basically a central air conditioner with a few extra parts. The outdoor unit looks exactly the same as one for a central air conditioner. It is called a heat pump because it literally pumps heat out of your house (cooling mode) or into your house (heating mode) to or from the outdoor air around the outdoor compressor/condenser unit.

Among central heating and cooling systems, geothermal heat pumps provide the highest efficiency and lowest year-round utility bills. While geothermal heat pumps have higher initial installation costs (due to the need to place loops, or tubing, to run through the ground or to a well or pond), the federal stimulus bill provides consumers (through the end of 2016) a 30 percent tax credit on the cost of putting in a geothermal heat pump system, which makes them much more affordable.

The primary advantage of installing a heat pump of any kind is that they can be used year-round for both heating and cooling. This provides year-round sav-

ings and shortens the payback period. In contrast, a super-efficient furnace generally gets used only during winter and a central air conditioner only during summer.

For homes with only one or two occupants, a portable heat pump may be a good choice. I use a portable heat pump in my own home/office. In addition to cooling the room during summer, it also functions as an efficient portable heater during winter. It produces 14,000 Btu per hour of cooling and 11,000 Btu per hour of heating. This is much more heat output than a standard electric space heater using the same amount of electricity during winter.

The efficiency of a portable air conditioner is similar to that of a window air conditioner. Although this is less efficient than most central air conditioners, using one can still save you money. By keeping just one or two rooms comfortably warm (or cool), you can set your central thermostat lower and save electricity that otherwise would power your central unit. Use it in the dining room at dinner-

time, roll it into the living room for TV watching, and then relocate it to the bedroom for sleeping.

They are typically mounted on casters so they can be easily rolled from room to room. Most operate on standard 120-volt electricity, so they can be plugged into any wall outlet near a window.

A portable air conditioner/heat pump operates similarly to a typical window unit. The internal rotary compressor, evaporator and condenser function in the same way. The primary difference is it is on casters and rests on the floor.

When choosing a heating and cooling system, there are additional factors to consider.

- Make sure the system is sized correctly for your home.
- Research what kind of maintenance the system will require.
- Have your ductwork inspected to be sure it is in good shape and compatible with the new system.
- Get estimates from several reputable contractors.

© James Dulley



A super-efficient geothermal heat pump is shown with and without the front cover. Notice the large air cleaner and water fittings that can also heat water.

Remembering Columbia

A nation's tragedy, a county's strength and the heroic lives of seven astronauts are preserved in space shuttle museum.

By Mark Miller



The East Texas county of Sabine and town of Hemphill will never forget February 1, 2003. What began as a mild and sunny winter morning turned into a catastrophe that started with a horrific fireball in the sky and ended with unspeakable sorrow.

It was the day that NASA's space shuttle Columbia, upon re-entry into Earth's atmosphere after a 16-day science mission, disintegrated, killing the seven astronauts onboard. Ultimately, about 25,000 searchers recovered more than 84,000 pieces of debris—accounting for about 40 percent of the shuttle—that were scattered over thousands of acres of Louisiana and East Texas, including Sabine National Forest.

But early on, it was Sabine County that stepped up: More than 10,000 residents, including many from Hemphill, offered to assist with NASA's recovery efforts, which included the grim task of finding the astronauts' remains. During the weeks that followed, volunteers helped comb the dense forest and open fields on foot and horseback alongside local, state and national agency officials and media who came to town.

Their collective desire to memorialize the lives lost in the accident and the town's response to the disaster came to fruition February 1, 2011, with the opening of the Patricia Huffman Smith Museum Remembering Columbia in Hemphill.

The idea for a museum evolved from the efforts of a group of citizens, including Sabine County Judge Jack Leath, now deceased; then-business owner Belinda Gay; and U.S. Forest Service employee Marsha Cooper, who helped organize annual memorial celebrations to honor the astronauts.

But the group wanted to do more. They formed the Sabine County Columbia Memorial Committee with the goal of building a permanent tribute, a museum.

Cooper recalls a most poignant time during the search: "Our main objective was to recover the astronauts' remains," she said. "We knew the first day we had all seven astronauts here, but kept it from the media to protect the families."

After the remains were recovered, nearly 1,200 people attended a memorial service in town. "The service was a time for us to sit down and think about why this tragedy had happened to us," Cooper said. "Then we came to realize there was no place on God's green earth better than here. This is where they came to rest."

But a museum memorializing that resting place would cost money the group didn't have.

Enter Houston real-estate executive Albert Smith, whose wife, Patricia Huffman Smith, died in January 2010. The couple had donated money and all the land for the J.R. Huffman Public Library, named for Patricia's father, which opened in 1994 in Hemphill.

Smith wanted to do something in memory of his wife. So in April, he donated the money for a museum to be built adjacent to the library. The following winter, on the eighth anniversary of the Columbia tragedy, the 3,400-square-foot

museum held its grand opening.

At the front of the museum stands a replica of the Columbia, one-fifteenth the size of the actual spacecraft and designed to look as if it's being propelled skyward. Just outside the entrance is a slab of Sabine County limestone inscribed with the opening of a Bible passage, Joshua 1:6-9, that Commander Rick Husband recited to the crew before liftoff: "Be strong and of a good courage ..."

Inside, displays tell the story of space travel through photographs and objects, such as flight manuals and logs, freeze-dried food and a NASA space suit. Columbia completed 28 missions after its first launch on April 12, 1981.

One section of the museum is dedicated to the shuttle program itself, and a classroom contains books and interactive exhibits where visitors can learn about Columbia and its role in the overall goals of U.S. space exploration. In the works is an IMAX-style theater featuring NASA and National Geographic space-related videos.

Another area of the museum is devoted to showcasing local residents' remarkable contributions to the recovery efforts, undertaken in the midst of deep personal sadness and a state of national mourning.

And, finally, there is a collection of 7-foot-tall glass display cases with personal items from each of the astronauts who lost their lives on that February morning: Commander Rick Husband; Pilot William McCool; Payload Commander Michael Anderson; Mission Specialists David Brown, Kalpana Chawla and Laurel Clark; and Payload Specialist Ilan Ramon, Israel's first astronaut.

One case contains mementos from two men—pilot Jules "Buzz" Mier Jr. of Arizona and Charles Krenek, a debris search aviation specialist with the Texas Forest Service—who were killed in a helicopter crash during a search-and-recovery mission.

Flanked by an American flag and a flag representing each individual's branch of service, the cases hold objects once a part of each astronaut's life: a contact-lens case, military ID tags, a native dress from India, a pair of running shoes, a diary with Hebrew entries, family photos and a pair of Porsche racing gloves—the personal effects of those whose spirits found their rest in Hemphill.

Freelance writer Mark Miller lives in Flower Mound.

Hours: Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; and Sunday, 1-5 p.m.; www.patriciahuffman-smithcolumbiamuseum.org

As the Columbia space shuttle orbits Earth, Commander Rick Husband (bottom center) takes a group picture by clicking a remote control. Husband is flanked by Kalpana Chawla, Laurel Clark and Ilan Ramon (red shirts, from left) and David Brown, William McCool and Michael Anderson (blue shirts, from left). Searchers found the camera in the wreckage, and this photo is displayed at the Hemphill museum.



NASA/JSC

Field of Daydreams

*January gardens
are lush, bountiful,
fragrant and
bloom-filled. Nary
a bug in sight.*

BY SUZI SANDS

B

rrr! Cold, in some parts of Texas, settles across the land. The days are short. The nights are long. Perfect for dreaming. What a time to garden!

Gone are the holiday gift catalogs, replaced by a bumper crop of gardening catalogs sprouting from the mailbox. Emails pop up overnight, luring me to garden websites both exotic and mundane. We have all seen zinnias and marigolds, but how many of us have seen a whipcord cobra lily? Thanks to online resources such as www.seedman.com, any of us could be first on the block to show off this 4-foot-tall lily with a jack-in-the pulpit flower and a foot-long tongue. That ain't no Texas plant! And that's just the start! No box of chocolates tempts me the way garden catalogs do.

The Burpee Gardening catalog offers more than 120 varieties of tomato seeds. Choose from the petite, 1-ounce green grape tomato or the humongous 4-pound porterhouse. Or what about the maroon black krim heirloom tomato?

Native American Seed (www.seedsources.com), a family-owned business near Junction, actually makes me want to plant a scourge from my West Texas childhood: devil's claw (*Proboscidea louisianica*). Listed online in the conservancy seeds section for "scarce and uniquely beautiful wildflowers," devil's claw has orchid-like flowers and fruit that can be eaten like okra. If I'd only known back then of its beauty and utility, I might have forgiven its vicious, grasping claws.

Winter is dangerous for gardeners. Not having to actually prep, plant, weed and water, housebound gardeners are inclined to run amok, dreaming and scheming way beyond reality. Good sense goes dormant along with the rest of the garden. Pest and pestilence are forgotten along with heat and drought. Time, money and energy are no barriers. I envision persimmon trees, bull's-eye beets and night-blooming jasmine flourishing in my garden along with all the tomatoes, baby squash, berries, herbs and asparagus I will grow and share with friends and family. Hyacinth beans, showing off neon pinkish-purple flowers and burgundy seedpods, twirl around my 8-foot copper obelisk. The cucumbers strain my hog-wire fence. Mind you, this all takes place in a small suburban yard.

Then to bring this all to fruition, I check out garden-supply catalogs. Maybe I need a seed hotel to get my babies off to a good start. Surely the little seedlings would like a warming mat to ward off the spring chill and give them a good start in life. What about those spiffy copper plant nametags? Or should I go with the

aluminum markers that tie onto the plants? Then maybe I need some seaweed fertilizer. A good diet is important to all growing things.

Without fail, seed and garden-supply catalogs that arrive in the winter tempt the compliant and eagerly misled gardener into dreaming big. Maybe too big, but then maybe not. Dreams are free therapy. It's also been said that dreams are gifts we give ourselves.

Nonetheless, an intervention is called for. A small dose of reality might be in order. The strong light of day interrupts my daydreams. And the weeding of the catalogs begins. What can really work in my yard? What can thrive in 100-degree heat without daily watering? What plants and products deliver the best bang for the buck? What natives are showy and attract hummingbirds and butterflies?

I'm ordering a dog's breakfast of seeds, plants and products. Some plants are for food. I will wedge these into my garden along with flowers and native grasses. Some plants are for show. I concentrate on tough butterfly-attracting natives but do slip in some purely ornamental daylilies.

My haricot vert (thin green bean) and lemon basil seeds are here. I better get cracking. Soon it will be time to put aside the catalogs and dreams and prep the garden. Clip the frozen plants. Mix in compost. Check the soaker hoses. Mulch the trees, shrubs, native grasses and perennials.

Each year, the challenge of bringing those winter dreams to blooming and fruiting reality makes my heart sing. Each year I get a tiny bit better. And isn't that what life is about: getting a little better at whatever we do. Gardens, friendship, work, life.

And, yes, I did order the devil's claw.

Suzi Sands, art director





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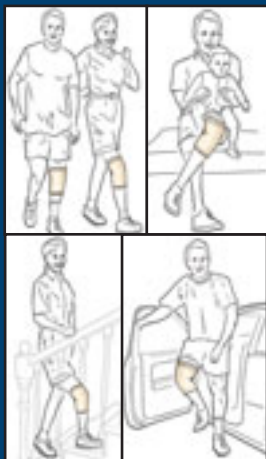
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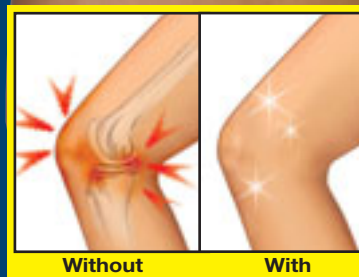
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The Hide-and-Seek Fight of 1896

BY CLAY COPPEDGE

What if the NFL held a Super Bowl, but no one knew until shortly before kickoff where the game was to be played? That was sort of the situation in 1896 when Peter Maher and Bob Fitzsimmons agreed to fight for the world heavyweight boxing championship. Oddly, almost no one—including the fighters, fans and the Texas Rangers—knew where this fight was going to take place until right up to the last minute.

Actually, the Super Bowl analogy only goes so far because America in the late 19th century had reached a point of anguish over society's violent and lascivious elements, and boxing was at the forefront of social critics' agenda, right along with women riding bicycles and the evils of Demon Rum. Most states had outlawed prizefighting. Texas was one of the few exceptions. If the fight was going to take place at all, it would most likely take place in Texas, but where?

The event itself had roots in an earlier fight between Maher and Fitzsimmons in 1892. Fitzsimmons won that contest and set his sights on a championship bout with Gentleman Jim Corbett, who seemed more interested in being a celebrity than defending his heavyweight championship. Corbett put Fitzsimmons off for a while, but then relented.

The trouble began when promoter Dan Stuart announced that the fight would take place in Dallas. Gov. Charles Culberson responded to the news by calling a special session of the Legislature that made it illegal to swap punches for money anywhere in the state. While Stuart tried in vain to schedule the fight in Arkansas, Corbett vacated the title in favor of the winner of a fight between Maher and Steve O'Donnell in Carson City, Nevada. Maher won that fight, but Stuart still had to find a place to stage the title bout.

A group of businessmen in El Paso, who either didn't know or didn't care about the new law against prizefighting, offered Stuart a bonus of \$6,000 if he would stage the fight in their town. Stuart obliged, and El Paso, all abuzz over the prospect, soon welcomed not only the combatants but also a host of prizefight fans and hangers-on.

"Nothing short of lightning or the destruction of the earth by fire or flood can stop the contest we have arranged to pull off," Stuart declared. To embolden his claim, he announced that a weeklong "Fistic Carnival" featuring prizefights would be held in the wake of the championship bout. Texas Rangers from Ysleta showed up to monitor the situation. A group calling itself the Ministers' Union of El Paso took its criticisms of prizefighting as inherent brutality all the way to the U.S. Congress, which quickly enacted a federal law against any "pugilistic encounter between man and man or fight between man and bull or any other animal for money or for



After all the hype, the bout ended with a quick knockout punch.

other things of value, or for any championship" in any of the territories of the United States.

While the drama played itself out in El Paso, Judge Roy Bean, the fabled Law West of the Pecos, kept up with the proceedings from Langtry, where he minded his Jersey Lilly saloon and dispensed his own peculiar brand of justice. As the scheduled date of the bout grew nigh without any firm indication of where it would be held, Bean sent a telegram to Stuart that offered his town as a site if he so desired. Stuart so desired.

When a Southern Pacific train pulled into Langtry with its cargo of sportswriters, fight fans and gamblers on February 21, 1896, Bean was calmly taking in the scene from the front porch of the Jersey Lilly. He had constructed a ring on a sandbar at the bottom of Rio Grande Canyon, just across the river in the state of Coahuila, Mexico, beyond the jurisdiction of the Texas Rangers and politicians. Legendary but aging old West lawman and gambler Bat Masterson was there to serve as master of ceremonies and keep an eye on things, but the bout was over in the blink of an eye. It ended when Fitzsimmons knocked Maher unconscious. Maher said later, "I thought I had him licked until he punched me under the jaw and then it was all over with me and I quit thinking."

The fight was four years in the making but lasted less than two minutes. When it was over, the clear winner was Judge Roy Bean, for whom the fight turned out to be a real financial pleasure and a springboard to national fame.

Clay Coppedge, frequent contributor

*A version of this story appeared in Coppedge's book, *Forgotten Tales of Texas* (The History Press, 2011).*



Food educator Amanda Love teaches people how to cook and eat well.

Cooking and Eating Well

BY KEVIN HARGIS When is a blueberry not a blueberry? In some processed foods, the answer is: when it's a glob of artificially flavored, sugar-laden food starch and oil.

A recent report by the nonprofit Consumer Wellness Center found that some food companies routinely depicted cereals, muffins and other products as containing blueberries when in reality, there were none present or there were just small amounts far down on the ingredients label.

The practice is legal because the labels of ingredients show there is little to no actual fruit in the product. But how many of you read the labels on foods you buy?

Reading labels is important—not just to determine calories, sodium and fat, but also to determine how many artificial flavors and colors go into food. The more artificial ingredients, the more processed and less nutritious the food.

I sat down recently with natural food chef and educator Amanda Love to talk about nutrition and food. The best way to reduce your consumption of processed food, she said, is to make meals yourself using wholesome, healthful ingredients. The Austinite, who teaches across the United States, is a strong proponent of nutritious cooking and eating.

“Good nutrition can make one feel satisfied, happy, nourished and full of energy, where a diet devoid of real nutrition can lead to disease, obesity, depression, low energy and an unproductive life,” she said.

Traditional foods and ones that are not factory processed are the most nutritious, she said.

HEALTHY FOOD RESOURCES

The American Heart Association recently launched the **Simple Cooking with Heart** campaign, featuring a wide array of healthy recipes that are easy to cook. The campaign also includes video instructions on how to prepare the recipes. It can be found at www.heart.org/simplecooking.

Sally Fallon's **Nourishing Traditions** (New Trends Publishing, 1999) is a comprehensive cookbook featuring hundreds of recipes for traditional food preparation and is a favorite among health-conscious cooks.

“Generally, food that is closest to nature is best. Food that is manmade and further away from its natural state is less nutritious,” she explained. “If you want to know if something is good for you, ask yourself the question, ‘Were my great-grandparents eating this food?’ Basically, asking this question will lead to answering which foods are new to our modern food supply and which ones have been around for hundreds of years.”

The atmosphere in which food is eaten can also make a difference in one's health, Love believes. Making eating a social event can go a long way toward improving eating habits and overall well-being:

“I feel part of why people overeat in general is because they eat alone, and so on a deeper level, they are still hungry ... It fulfills our need for communion and connection with others. Sharing a meal is one of the most primal ways to do that.”

So how does a busy family, with all the activities and distractions of modern life, find time not only to eat together, but also to cook nutritious meals? A good plan helps.

“Cook smarter, not harder,” Love said. “Taking a little time to menu plan can save you a lot of time and money in the long run.”

Think ahead at least to the next day's meals and perform any time-saving steps you can, such as cleaning and chopping vegetables or putting the ingredients for a particular dish together.

It may seem obvious, but good nutrition begins by acquiring nutritious food.

Maria G. Boosalis, former director of clinical nutrition at the University of

Kentucky College of Health Sciences, advises people to “shop the perimeter” at a grocery store. That is, spend more time along the edges where fresh items are usually situated.

“Processed foods and foods that are higher in sugar and fat like soda and chips tend to be placed in the middle aisles,” she notes.

You can find nutrient-dense foods available even in the smallest of grocery stores: whole grains, lean meats and fruits and vegetables. But eating healthily doesn’t mean a boring diet of brown rice and chicken breasts—you can have dessert, too. There is even a way to make sweets more nutritious, Love said.

“The key is to eat quality sweets made with healthy sweeteners like unrefined cane sugar, or palm sugar (from coconuts), xylitol, stevia, maple syrup or raw honey,” she explained. “When eating sweet foods, it is best to balance it with a healthy fat so the sugar is not absorbed into the bloodstream so quickly.”

Love, who is also a proponent of locally produced food, teaches seminars that give students hands-on experience making wholesome, nutritious food. You can find a schedule of classes on her website, <http://thebarefootcook.com>.

She shared with me some recipes featuring vegetables that are at their freshest in the winter months. If available, use organic versions of ingredients, she advised.

CREAM OF DELICATTA SQUASH SOUP

- 1 medium- to large-sized delicatta or other variety winter squash
- 1 yellow onion
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 quart chicken or vegetable broth
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon white pepper
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon cloves
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper, optional
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground ginger or 2 tablespoons fresh minced ginger
- 1/2 cup white wine, optional
- 1 can (14 ounces) coconut milk or 1 cup raw cream, raw milk or goat milk
- 1 teaspoon sea salt

Heat oven to 400 degrees. Place squash in baking dish and bake for about 1 hour or until tender. While squash is baking, chop onion coarsely and sauté in medium-sized pot with butter on medium-low heat until onion is caramelized. Add broth and heat until just simmering. Add spices and ginger. Once squash is tender, remove from oven and cool; slice in half and remove seeds. Cut squash into large chunks and place in pot (including skin). If desired, add wine and simmer two minutes. Puree soup in blender or with immersion blender until smooth. Add coconut milk or dairy of choice. Keep warm but do not bring to simmer once coconut milk or dairy is added. Add salt and additional spices to taste. Garnish with baked pumpkin or squash seeds.

Servings: 4. Serving size: 1/4 of soup. Per serving: 298 calories, 6.4 g protein, 22.9 g fat, 13.2 g carbohydrates, 2 g dietary fiber, 1,153 mg sodium, 3.4 g sugars, 7 mg cholesterol

Desserts, if eaten in moderation and made with healthy ingredients, are a sweet treat to be enjoyed on occasion. The best of the fall season is offered in this recipe with the rich flavor of sweet potatoes and the deep taste and wonderful texture of pecans.

SWEET POTATO PECAN PIE

- 1 cup sprouted flour, white spelt flour or all-purpose flour
- 1/4 teaspoon plus dash salt, divided
- 1/3 cup cold butter
- 3 large eggs
- 1 cup cooked sweet potato, skin removed and pureed
- 1 cup cane sugar, divided

- 2/3 cup half and half
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon allspice
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract, divided
- 1/3 cup maple syrup
- 1 tablespoon melted butter
- 1 cup pecan halves

Combine flour and 1/4 teaspoon salt in a small bowl. Cut cold butter into small pieces and cut into flour until mixture is the size of small peas. Gradually sprinkle in 3 to 3 1/2 tablespoons ice water, 1 tablespoon at a time, until mixture holds together when gathered with fork. Press together in disk, wrap in plastic and refrigerate at least 20 minutes. Lightly beat two eggs in medium bowl. Stir in sweet potato puree, 1/2 cup sugar, half and half, spices and 1 teaspoon vanilla. Set aside. In separate bowl, beat remaining egg. Stir in maple syrup, 1/2 cup sugar, melted butter, 1/2 teaspoon vanilla and dash salt. Mix well. Stir in pecans.

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Roll out pastry dough on a lightly floured surface to 11- to 12-inch circle. Transfer to 9- or 10-inch pie pan. Trim crust, allowing half-inch overhang. Fold under the edge and flute. Place on a baking sheet and pour in sweet potato mixture. Bake 25 minutes. Pour pecan mixture over sweet potato layer and spread evenly. Reduce heat to 350 degrees and bake another 20 minutes, or until filling is slightly puffed and knife inserted in center comes out clean. Cool on a rack.

Servings: 8. Serving size: 1 slice. Per serving: 435 calories, 6.8 g protein, 21.2 g fat, 27 g carbohydrates, 4 g dietary fiber, 121 mg sodium, 36 g sugars, 101 mg cholesterol

\$100 RECIPE CONTEST

May's recipe contest topic is *Sunday Brunch*. Whether a relaxed morning with friends or a special Mother's Day treat, brunch is the meal where almost anything goes. Send us your favorite brunch recipes. The deadline is January 10.

Submit recipes online at TexasCoopPower.com/Contests. Or mail them to Home Cooking, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701. You may also fax them to (512) 763-3408. Please include your name, address and phone number, as well as the name of your electric co-op. Also, let us know where you found the recipe or whether it's one you developed yourself. The top winner will receive \$100. Runners-up will also receive a prize.

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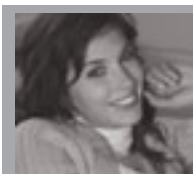
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Facial Wrinkles and Lines – Can a Cream Work as Good as an Injection?

DEAR DORRIS: I am a 45 year old, beautiful (so I think) woman who is considering getting an injection like Botox to fill my wrinkles. The lines on my forehead are relatively deep, and I am sick of looking so much older than I really am. Some other women at my job have used injections and they instantly looked years younger and much better than me.



Dear Dorris:

My self-esteem is dropping because I feel like the “old lady” at work, and I refuse to even go for happy hour with the others from work, because I feel so old. I can’t really afford the expensive injections though, and frankly, I am petrified of the needle and dangers that go along with it. Is there any cream out there that can bring the same instant result, and wrinkle filling effect that the injectable treatments can?

Wrinkled and Scared, Dallas County

DEAR WRINKLED AND SCARED : Luckily for many people, there is a new product on the market that is the only true topical dermal filler I have found. It is called the Dermagist Phenomenon Dermal Filler. It is a cream that treats wrinkles with peptide-based science that makes your skin produce collagen and elastin, which rapidly helps heal your wrinkles. **PLUS**, it contains a highly revered and talked about complex called Metahylate®. This complex gathers and directs wrinkle-filling moisture directly into the wrinkles, giving a very precise treatment... much like a needle can give. Additionally, the cream has microscopic prisms in it that reflect light, leaving a wrinkle virtually invisible to the naked eye.

Since it’s priced affordably, and is much safer than an injectable wrinkle treatment, it will not be long until the whole world is talking about it. **The Dermagist Phenomenon®** Dermal Filler is available online at Dermagist.com or you can order or learn more by calling toll-free, **888-771-5355**. Oh, I almost forgot... I was given a promo code when I placed my order that gave me 10% off. The code was “TXP2”. It’s worth a try to see if it still works.



▲ In January 2010, Hamilton County Electric Cooperative members **Buddy** and **Ella Morgan** were surprised to find parts of their favorite swimming hole frozen on their ranchland near Moline.

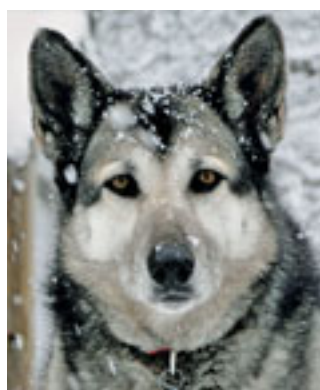


▲ Freeze-frame: Nellie creeps in for a closer look as CoServ Electric member **Heather Allen** takes her picture in a snowy field in Aubrey.

Upcoming in Focus on Texas

ISSUE	SUBJECT	DEADLINE
Mar	Wild Animals	Jan 10
Apr	Easter	Feb 10
May	Everything's Bigger in Texas	Mar 10
Jun	Hard at Work	Apr 10
Jul	Yard Art	May 10
Aug	Pet Tricks	Jun 10

WILD ANIMALS is the topic for our **MARCH 2012** issue. Send your photo—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to **Wild Animals, Focus on Texas, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701**, before **JANUARY 10**. A stamped, self-addressed envelope must be included if you want your entry returned (approximately six weeks). **Please do not submit irreplaceable photographs—send a copy or duplicate.** If you use a digital camera, submit your highest-resolution images online at TexasCoopPower.com/Contests. We regret that Texas Co-op Power cannot be responsible for photos that are lost in the mail or not received by the deadline. Please note that we cannot provide individual critiques of submitted photos.



▲ Sheila greatly enjoyed the snowfall of February 2010 and welcomed home Wise Electric Cooperative member and owner **Barbara Yerby** every day.

BABY, IT'S COLD OUTSIDE

Old Man Winter lingers. He casts his cold breath across the land and settles into every nook and cranny, content to bide his time as we hunker down and fight the frost. But with his gray shadow comes a bone-chilling beauty that some Texans don't see too often. When he makes his arrival this season, enjoy every idle hour, but be sure to journey to places you know and love, witnessing how winter's splendor paints the familiar anew.

—ASHLEY CLARY-CARPENTER

On TexasCoopPower.com: See more of our readers' winter photos.



▲ Pedernales Electric Cooperative member **Sandy Gravenor** captured this chilly Hill Country scene in Henly in January 2007.

Mike and **Pam Deegan**, members of Wood County Electric Cooperative, used Mike's February 2010 photo of their Lindale home for Christmas cards. ▼



AROUND TEXAS AROUND TEXAS

This is just a sampling of the events and festivals around Texas. For the complete listing, please visit TexasCoopPower.com/Events.

PICK OF THE MONTH

JANUARY 28 FREDERICKSBURG

Indian Artifact Show
(830) 626-5561



JANUARY



BRENNHAM
Winter Antiques Show

07 CORPUS CHRISTI
30th Annual Boar's Head & Yule Log Festival,
(361) 854-3044,
<http://firstchristiancc.org>

SCHERTZ
Boy Scout Troop 51
60th Anniversary,
(210) 651-5046,
www.bsatroop51.com

07 BRENNHAM [7-8]
Winter Antiques Show,
1-888-273-6426,
www.ruraltexasantiques.com

12 MANOR [12-21]
Travis County Youth Show,
(512) 278-8498,
www.traviscountyouthshow.org

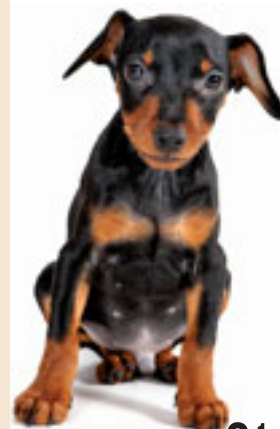
21 CLIFTON
BARK Gala,
(254) 622-2457,
www.barkrescue.org

MCKINNEY
Four Funny Females,
(214) 544-4630,
www.mckinneyperformingartscenter.org

FREDERICKSBURG
[21-22] Hill Country
Gem & Mineral Show,
(830) 895-9630,
www.fredericksburgrockhounds.org

28 ROUND TOP
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Quintet, (979) 249-3129,
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21 CLIFTON
BARK Gala

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Band Quintet

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ROCKPORT [28-29]
Piecemakers by the
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28 **WASHINGTON** [28-29]
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Piecemakers
by the Bay
Quilt Show



4
LOCKHART
8th Annual Wild (Not-So-Wild)
Game Dinner

FEBRUARY

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www.pwfaa.org

04 **LOCKHART**
8th Annual Wild (Not-So-
Wild) Game Dinner,
(512) 764-2585

04 **SHERMAN**
The Liverpool Legends,
(903) 813-2251,
<http://communityseries.com>

We pick events for the
magazine directly from
TexasCoopPower.com.
Submit your event for
March by January 10, and
it just might be featured in
this calendar!

TUBA: 2012 © ROMAN SHYSHAK. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCK.COM. QUILTS: 2012 © LIZABETH ROLFSON. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCK.COM. WILD TURKEYS: 2011 © GERALD DEBOER. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCK.COM.



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PHOTO BY TOM WILLIAMSON

More than 460,000 passengers have chugged over the Hill Country since the Austin Steam Train Association began hosting rides 20 years ago. Train excursions include children's adventures and a six-hour day trip dubbed the Hill Country Flyer.



SAY YES TO ADVENTURE

A rolling excursion on the Hill Country Flyer

BY SUZANNE HABERMAN

The Hill Country Flyer has been ushering passengers through the Hill Country between Cedar Park and Burnet for 20 years. The diesel-electric locomotive, operated by the **AUSTIN STEAM TRAIN ASSOCIATION**, leads coach, excursion and first-class cars on a 66-mile journey with a two-hour layover in Burnet. There, passengers disembark near the historic square for shopping, dining and a Wild West showdown.

Overseeing the tasks of the flyer is an all-volunteer crew, ranging from 12-year-old junior car attendant Avery Mitchell to 79-year-old docent Maurice Beckham, who's made more than 1,300 volunteer trips. Volunteers also handle the train's technical operations as brakemen, engineers and conductors, as I learn first-hand riding the train in late summer.

Despite inviting family to join me on the ride, all bowed out. Would I still go alone? *Yes.*

That's one thing I've learned as a reporter: Always say yes. You never know what adventure awaits.

At about 10 a.m., I find my seat, 41W, on the train among pairs of chairs lining

a carpeted aisle. The 1920s restored car has no climate control, but my spot is a window seat, and all the school bus-style windows are open. Soon, the Hill Country Flyer is rolling over a 130-year-old track, the cars' repetitious clanks, screeches and whirs increasing in tempo as the train reaches its max speed of about 35 mph.

The flyer pauses in Bertram to pick up "Sheriff" Tex Copsetta, who boards wearing a gray cowboy hat, silver star and an 1872 Colt .45 Peacemaker holstered on his hip. He and the **BURNET GUNFIGHTERS** will be performing a Wild West gunfight in Burnet today. Don't miss it, he warns, or he'll issue a warrant.

During the layover, alluring treasures at the **BURNET FARMERS MARKET** booths and in the **BURNET ANTIQUE MALL** tempt me, but my rumbling tummy demands lunch before shopping. The peach-colored storefront of **TEA-LICIOUS** on South Main Street draws me in for quiche.

By the return trip, I feel confident in my "train legs," as Mitchell calls them, so I navigate the jostling coaches to the back window of the last car. There, the

tracks speed out from under me and run off into the distance. I return to my seat without a stumble—unlike earlier when I was so off-kilter that Daniel Doggett, the Austin Steam Train Association's community outreach coordinator, laughingly told me I looked drunk.

As the Hill Country Flyer approaches Cedar Park at about 4:30 p.m., conductor Mike Hitzfelder leans out the door of the last rail car as it glides over a Y in the tracks. Once the last axle passes over, he jumps from the barely moving train to manually throw the switch, a lever that redirects the tracks. He throws his full weight into the task of pulling the waist-high handle over an arc.

The train backs up, screeching and puffing on its new course to the Cedar Park depot. After it halts, Hitzfelder is all business, arranging to park the cars and engine in the yard. Despite the stern expression Hitzfelder wears under his black conductor's hat as I approach, I asked for an up-close look at the engine.

That's another lesson I've learned as a reporter: Always ask. The worst one can do is say no.

But Hitzfelder doesn't say no. He nods and slips off his work glove to shake my hand. Escorting me to the front of the train, he waves toward steps leading onto the nose of the black and red engine. I climb up.

Inside, brakeman Tommie Burleyson welcomes me aboard the No. 442 engine. Engineer Brian Smith sits on a stool mounted near a control panel. With a grin, he asks if I'd like to ride along while he parks the cars and engine. *Yes.*

With three blasts of the breathy horn, Smith throws the throttle into reverse. We chug back and forth until all the cars are parked, and Smith puts the engine in neutral. He asks if I'd be up for a task: Just press this button when I tell you to and don't let up until the engine turns off. Do you want to power it down? *Yes.*

Suzanne Haberman, staff writer

On TexasCoopPower.com

You'll find a schedule of 2012 train excursions and meet the volunteers of engine No. 442 in a slideshow.



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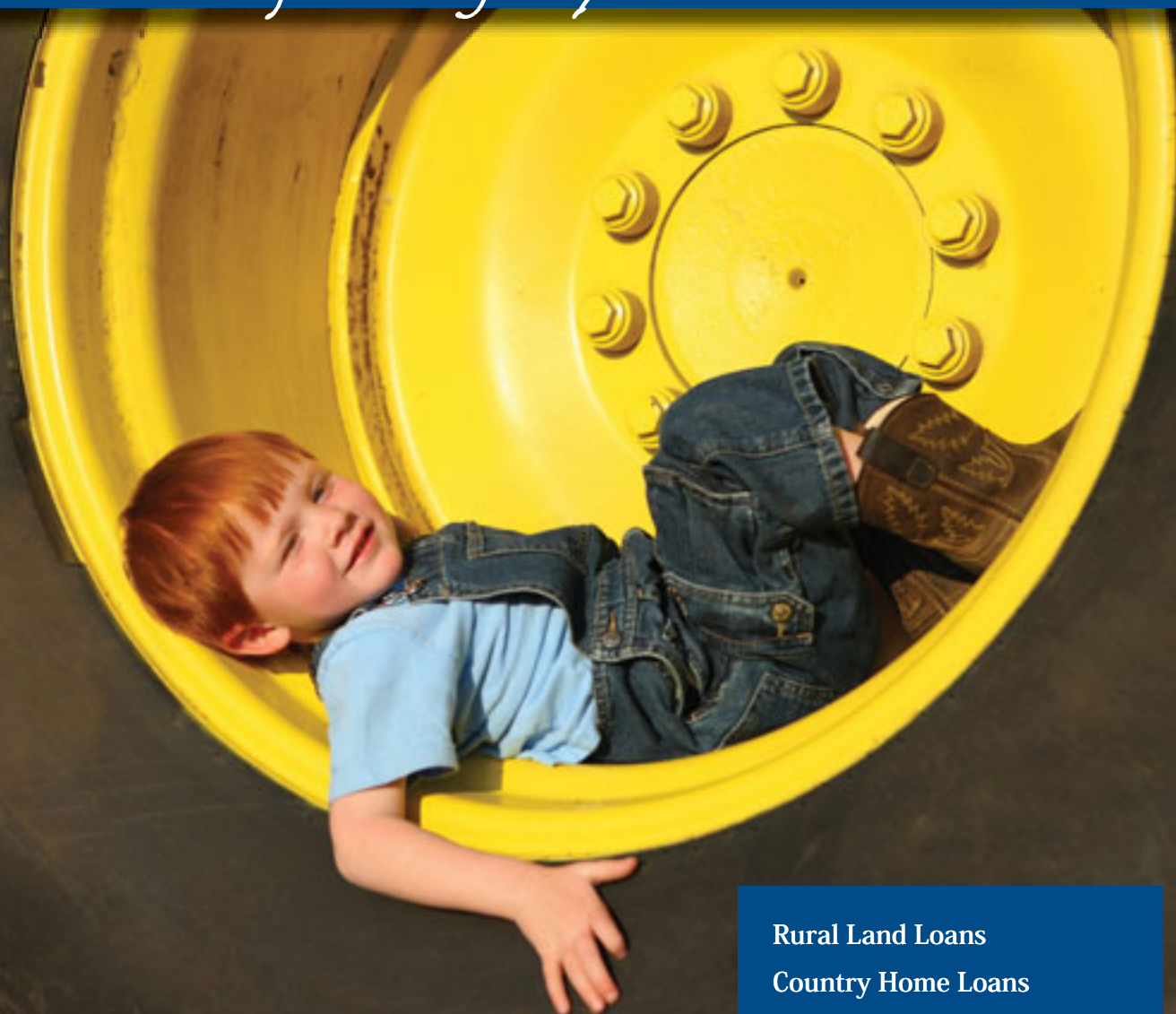
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