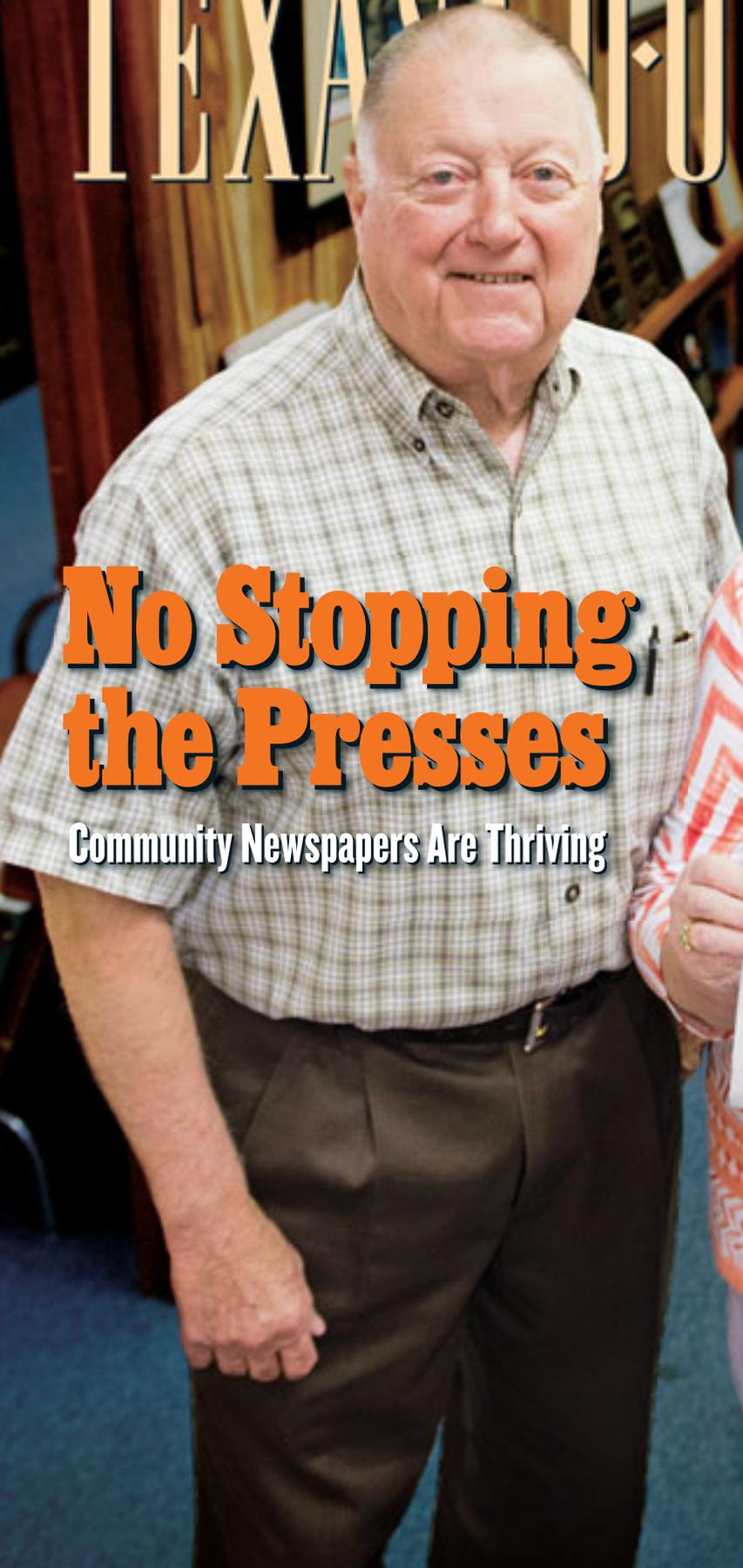
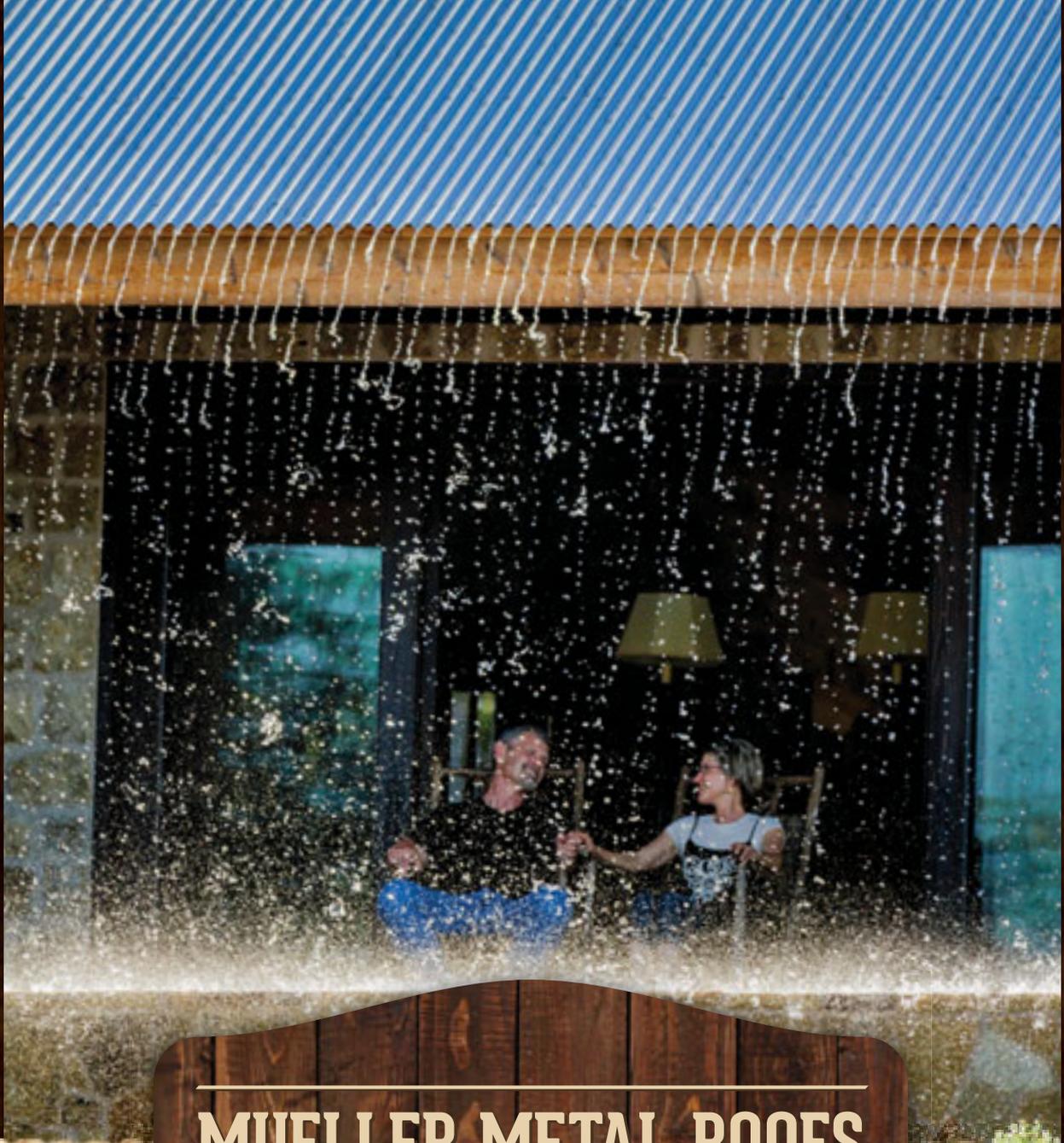


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HOMETOWN NEWS: Kathy Cooke, publisher of The Rockdale Reporter, looks over page proofs as a recent edition comes together.

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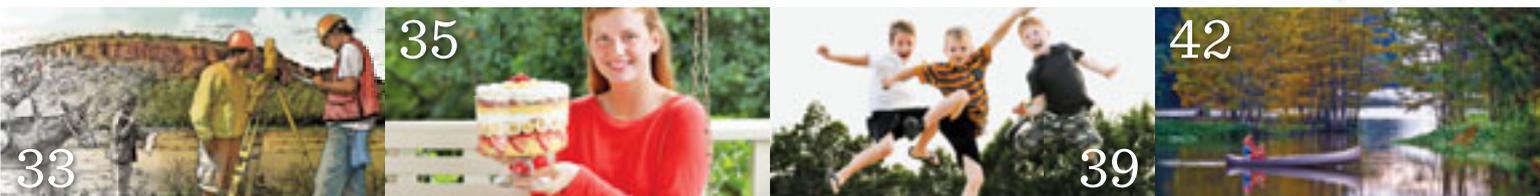
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ON THE COVER *The Cooke family, including Kathy and father Bill, has published The Rockdale Reporter since 1911. Photo by Woody Welch*

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We ♥ 'Darting'

We've been receiving Texas Co-op Power for more than five years, and the July 2014 issue was the best ever. More articles like "Darting Around Texas," please.

GERALD BENNETT | LLANO COUNTY
PEDERNALES EC

Inspiring Teacher

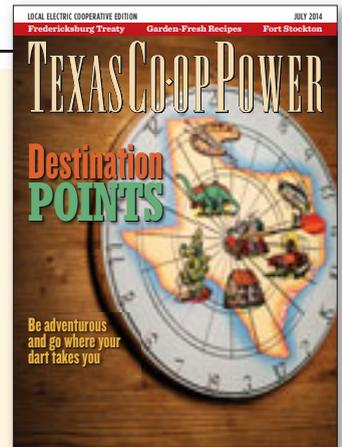
Mr. Young is a true inspiration ["We Live in a Different World," July 2014]. Not very often does a teacher [Lewis Young] come along that touches the lives of everyone that walks through their door. He was that and so much more to his students.

HOLLY MOFFETT, VIA FACEBOOK

The Art of Generosity

Your introduction to counties around Texas was refreshing ["Darting Around Texas," July 2014]. I was especially delighted with the Hemphill County story because during high school and my freshman year at Trinity University, I was friends with Malouf Abraham Jr. Years later, I met his charming wife, Therese. Their gift of The Citadelle is so in character for this outstanding family.

ROSE SMITH HALL | KERRVILLE | BANDERA EC



there recently and enjoyed it immensely! It was just as Ms. Mattei described, and we included a visit to the National Museum of the

of unintended consequences, some of which have gotten us into "species running amok" issues. Sodium nitrite poisoning is a horrible, painful way to die. A clean bullet is much more humane.

More important, how precisely does one keep other, more acceptable species or even pets from consuming these pellets? One can't, and so the very creatures that might be protected from feral hogs through use of the pellets might end up meeting the same horrific end.

It's too dangerous a method for indiscriminate use, and surely there must be other methods to consider before resorting to mass poisonings.

ROB AMERINEL | FREDERICKSBURG
CENTRAL TEXAS EC

get angry at us. Our insurance can be jeopardized if they get injured.

There is nothing free to us landowners to let these hunters on our property. Actually, they have left a bad taste in our mouths.

M.P. GRAHAM | BUFFALO
HOUSTON COUNTY EC



Susan's Sriracha Bacon Chicken Bites

Great Recipe

Just tried the Susan's Sriracha Bacon Chicken Bites recipe ["Take it Outside!" June 2014]. It's a keeper! Yummy!

DIANE VAN EATON BAKER, VIA FACEBOOK
AUSTIN | PEDERNALES EC

Pacific War to get the full effect.

As an Air Force veteran, I just loved the place. We can't wait to go back when they host a USO Dance.

TIM BRUNER | BRAZORIA
JACKSON EC

Stepping Out at the Hangar

Thank you very much for the article by Eileen Mattei on the Hangar Hotel in Fredericksburg [Hit the Road, June 2014].

My girlfriend and I spent a night

Controlling Wild Pigs

It was with alarm and more than a little repugnance that I read the July letter regarding the use of sodium nitrite to address the feral hog problem.

Humans constantly forget laws

This is in response to a letter writer's comments about free hog hunting on our farms and ranches ["Wild Pigs," June 2014].

It's not that we don't welcome the idea that we should give free access to our properties for "low-income hunters" to hunt hogs, but it's their abuse of the privilege to hunt. They sometimes leave our gates open, disturb our livestock and leave their trash for us to clean up—and if we confront them, they

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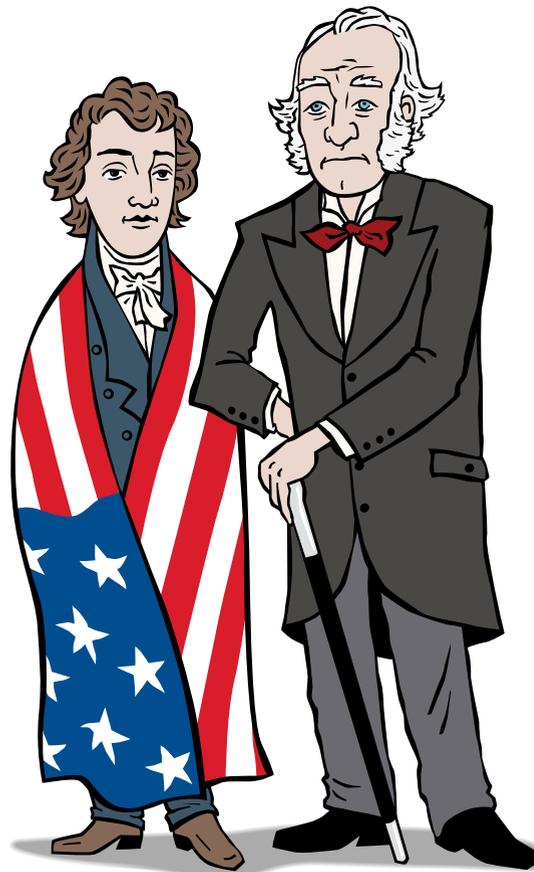
ON THIS DATE

The Star-Spangled Lawyer

Francis Scott Key holds a prominent place in American history for penning the song we call “The Star-Spangled Banner” on September 13, 1814. He was aboard a small American vessel and watched as the British tried and failed to destroy Fort McHenry in Chesapeake Bay.

Key, a poet and lawyer, holds a less prominent place in Texas history. In 1832, Sam Houston, a former congressman and governor of Tennessee, soundly clobbered U.S. Rep. William Stanberry of Ohio with a wooden cane on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington. Houston had taken exception to statements made by Stanberry.

Congress ordered Houston arrested. Despite the best efforts of his lawyer, Key, Houston was found guilty of contempt of Congress and reprimanded. Later that year, Houston headed for Texas, where he became the first president of Texas, a senator and governor.



WHO KNEW?

The Floating Capitol

For about a week and a half in 1836, the capitol of the Republic of Texas was a small river steamer called the Cayuga. On April 15 of that year, the Cayuga evacuated Harrisburg just ahead of Gen. Antonio López de Santa Anna and his troops and headed toward Galveston with President David G. Burnet and his cabinet on board. The business of the nation was conducted on the boat through April 26.

The steamboat disappeared from historical records 175 years ago when it was sold at a Liberty County sheriff’s sale September 4, 1839.

Read All About It

Newspapers first appeared in Texas about 200 years ago, but until the end of the Civil War, more than 100 publications were founded and folded, according to the Texas State Historical Association.

The earliest newspaper was a two-sided sheet of paper called *Gaceta de Texas*, printed in Spanish and published just once or twice in 1813. The *Galveston News*, founded in 1842, is among a handful of papers that started before the end of the Civil War and is still functioning.

Recent newspaper news seems bleak. Hundreds of Texas journalists have lost their jobs as newspapers struggle with declines in circulation and even greater declines in advertising revenue. Each of the three largest cities has seen a major newspaper go under in the past quarter-century: The *Dallas Times Herald* (1991), The *San Antonio Light* (1993) and the *Houston Post* (1995).

Still, community newspapers are thriving across the state—and doing their newsrooms proud. Texas has 463 paid-circulation newspapers, according to the Texas Press Association, including one that started up just last year—The *Northshore Star* in Lago Vista. Read “Success Stories” on Page 8 to learn more about why it’s unthinkable to stop the presses.



HOUSTON AND KEY: EDD PATTON

Keep Kids Buckled

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has designated September 14–20 as Child Passenger Safety Week. Whenever you're on the road, make sure your child passengers are buckled into age- and size-appropriate car seats, booster seats or seat belts. All children 12 and younger should ride in the back seat.

Only 46 percent of children ages 4–7 were properly restrained in booster seats in 2013, according to the agency. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention urges caregivers to follow these child passenger guidelines:

- **Birth to age 2:** Rear-facing car seat.
- **Age 2 to at least age 5:** Forward-facing car seat.
- **Age 5 until seat belts fit properly:** Booster seat.
- **Seat belts:** Seat belts fit properly when the lap belt lays across the upper thighs (not the stomach) and the shoulder belt lays across the chest (not the neck). For proper seatbelt fit, a person should be 57 inches tall

Find the nearest child car seat inspection station at safercar.gov.



HAPPENINGS

Blackland Faire Is To Dye For!

Craft-making enthusiasts find a lot to weave through at the Blackland Prairie Artisan & Fibre Faire, September 20–21 in Denison. Vintage crafts are on display and for sale, including knitted, woven and crocheted clothing and items for the home; handspun yarn; wood carvings; felted pieces; quilts and more.

The fair features craft classes and demonstrations, live music and food. Other events include indigo dyeing and a sheep-to-shawl event.

INFO: (214) 693-9975, bpaff.com

Find more happenings all across the state at TexasCoopPower.com



5,000,000,000

That was the estimated population of passenger pigeons, the most abundant land bird in North America in the 19th century. Elongated nesting colonies several miles wide could reach a length of 40 miles and turn day into night as they flew overhead. People on the ground reportedly would feel drafts as the birds beat their wings above. In most years, some of these birds wintered here, inhabiting much of northeastern Texas from September through March. One hundred years ago, on September 1, 1914, the last passenger pigeon died in the Cincinnati Zoo.

Success STORIES

Small-town newspapers thrive by putting community first and building reader connections **BY CAMILLE WHEELER**

In Rockdale, about an hour's drive northeast of Austin, Rockdale Country Ford purchases a half-page color ad in each week's newspaper—not for itself, but for other businesses. It's a gift to a community that in 2008 received devastating news: ALCOA, the area's largest employer, announced it was closing its aluminum smelter plant. Ultimately, 1,200 workers lost their jobs, with the economic repercussions rolling through the region like a tidal wave.

But six years later, Rockdale is on the financial rebound, with a symbiotic relationship between the business community and The Rockdale Reporter newspaper helping drive the recovery. It's good karma for local businesses to help each other out, says Eric Paulsen, general sales manager for Rockdale Country Ford.

That same attitude is on display on the pages of The Rockdale Reporter, which since June 1, 1911–103 consecutive years—has been owned by the Cooke family, a household name in Texas community newspaper circles. In the wake of ALCOA's closing, then-assistant publisher Kathy Cooke stepped into the role of town cheerleader. Weary of hearing the sorrowful, funeral-like questions from people in neighboring locales—"How are y'all doing?"—she would matter-of-factly respond: "We're going great."

Yes, says Cooke, who was named the paper's first female publisher in 2010, some people moved. But many stayed. The Reporter's circulation of 5,000 sustained only a slight hit. Local businesses started buying more ads. And at the heart of the recovery was the heart of the Cooke family.

"One of the best things about being a family-owned paper is, I'm free to do what I want," says Cooke, who has not raised advertising rates in five years. "If I were owned by a chain, I'd be required to make a certain amount of profit, whereas it's just

hurting me if we don't. This community was hit so hard, you just embrace everybody."

It's a stance that defines Texas' community newspaper landscape, where the prevailing philosophy is this: If the community succeeds, the newspaper will succeed.

In the words of veteran editor Roy Bode, who recently sold his Highland Lakes Newspapers group, he's never been in it as just another business owner. That's why, he says, he pumped more than \$100,000 worth of free and discounted advertising into his newspapers over the past year.

Bode's journalism path began in West Texas, where in high school he was paid a nickel per column inch for stories he wrote for the Andrews County News. His metro newspaper career was punctuated by three stops at the Dallas Times Herald, first as a reporter in the early 1970s. Ultimately, he was at the helm as editor from 1988 through December 9, 1991, when the Times Herald printed its final edition.

As president, editor and publisher of the Highland Lakes Newspapers group, Bode had come full circle to his small-town roots. But he didn't leave his big-picture journalism skills behind. Following Bode's lead, the editorial staffs at the papers in Burnet, Llano, Marble Falls and Lago Vista—where one of Texas' newest newspapers owes its existence to a handful of tenacious citizens—cover their circulation areas like blankets, reporting on everything from crawfish festivals and youth soccer leagues to serial burglaries and legal battles over water rights.

Like big-city newspapers, the papers give readers hard-hitting news—so hard-hitting that ace reporter James Walker, editor of the Burnet Bulletin and a veteran metro newspaper journalist,



'Newspapers are not dying. The message I'd like to send is that we're very much alive.'

Granite Publications President Dennis Wade

was punched at a 2012 election watch party by a local political leader who was upset with Walker's coverage of a primary race.

But unlike the metros, which strive to represent all levels of news, these four papers, like many other publications around the state, are part of an evolving community newspaper model in Texas that provides the local news readers seem to care most about. These papers mix feel-good stories with coverage of complex, timely and politically controversial issues to produce an all-natural, hometown product.

Metro papers, meanwhile, nationally and in Texas, are struggling. Over the past five years, Texas' five largest daily newspapers—the Austin American-Statesman, The Dallas Morning News, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, the Houston Chronicle and the San Antonio Express-News—have suffered overall declines in advertising revenue and print circulation numbers. Cost-cutting measures implemented by corporate owners have resulted in layoffs and voluntary severance packages.

Yet across Texas, community newspapers are thriving, with individual, family and group owners capitalizing on a business strategy that puts community first. The feedback from the 20-plus editors, publishers, owners, reporters, citizen journalists and newspaper industry representatives interviewed in person and by phone for this story is consistent: Overall, advertising revenues are trending up; circulation numbers are holding steady

or moderately increasing; and newsroom staffs are being diversified in an effort to cover the news and events that matter most to communities.

Given the troubled state of big-city newspapers, how is this possible? The answer lies in an increasingly popular mainstream media term: hyperlocal journalism, a style of enterprise reporting that gives readers an exclusive view of the news and events within their communities and immediate surrounding areas.

"We were hyperlocal before hyperlocal was cool," jokes Jim Moser, president and owner of Brenham-based Moser Community Media, which now manages 21 community newspapers with the July 1 acquisition of four Central Texas publications: The Highlander (Marble Falls), Burnet Bulletin, Llano County Journal and The Northshore Star (Lago Vista).

The four papers, previously owned by Bode and his wife, Ellen, are now owned by three principal partners: Jim Moser, his father, Charles Moser, and Mark Henry, the new editor and publisher for the newspaper group the Bodes bought in 2006. The Northshore Star, the group's newest member, joined the roster in 2013.

In Brenham, Moser works alongside his father, 71-year-old Charles Moser, the company's consulting executive officer who served as editor and publisher of the Brenham Banner-Press from 1970 through 2010. The 44-year-old Jim Moser brings a high level of professionalism and respect to the community newspaper



The Cooke family has been at the helm of *The Rockdale Reporter* in the Central Texas town of Rockdale for four generations. Kathy Cooke, publisher since 2010, followed in the footsteps of her father, Bill Cooke, right, the former editor and publisher. Bill holds a portrait of John Esten Cooke, his grandfather, who published his first issue in 1911. Kathy holds a photo of John's son, W.H. Cooke, who followed his father's career.

model, Bode says: “He’s building a hometown media company the right way. It’s a family company, not an investment company in Australia that decided to dabble in newspapering in the U.S.”

Moser, whose childhood duties for the Banner-Press included a bicycle-propelled paper route, describes his family’s three-legged stool of operating principles: 1. Meet community needs by continually improving upon the editorial and advertising product; 2. Take care of employees with competitive pay, the best possible benefits, flexible schedules and a positive work environment; and 3. Make money—robust advertising improves editorial content.

“People feel like talking about profit at a newspaper is a bad thing,” Moser says. “We don’t. A newspaper has to be profitable today to be viable tomorrow.”

The quest for survivability takes on many forms, as seen in the recent merger of four papers—three in the Texas Panhandle and one in southwest Oklahoma, and all located in county seats—into one big weekly: The Red River Sun, a newspaper owned by the Childress-based Blackburn Media Group, that brings together The Childress Index, Hall County Herald, Wellington Leader and The Hollis News (Oklahoma).

As described by Chris Blackburn, CEO of the media group and publisher of The Red River Sun, the publication launched in massive, old-school fashion on Wednesday, June 4, with subscribers in Childress, Memphis (the Hall County seat), Wellington and Hollis waking up to find papers that were thrown by 2 a.m.

Texas Press Association Executive Director Micheal Hodges cautions against seeing such a merger as a new trend. Rather, he explains, it is just one solution for rural, agriculture-based communities losing residents and business in the face of ongoing drought. Community newspaper readership, Hodges continues, hinges on relationships and roots—the elements at the heart of hyperlocal journalism.

At the same time, as Bode puts into perspective, the societal role of the metro newspaper has drastically shifted across a much

larger landscape. In the face of intense competition from the Internet, social media, radio and television, metros no longer offer exclusive one-stop shopping for big-ticket sports, state, national and international news and classified advertising.

As news becomes more fragmented, and harder to find in one place, one all-inclusive source of local news and advertising remains—the community newspaper. That includes The Cove Banner, a tabloid-sized weekly paper that debuted Friday, May 2, in the Central Texas town of Copperas Cove.

As co-owners and co-publishers, Larry Hauk and his wife, Joyce, are competing against two other Copperas Cove papers: the Copperas Cove Leader-Press, of which they were co-publishers 2001–13, and the Copperas Cove Herald. “You can’t get our news anywhere else,” Larry Hauk says. “You can’t get my news from the Internet.”

But editorial content and strategy alone don’t explain the success of small-town papers. What’s most important, say the community leaders and newspaper managers interviewed for this story, is that readers are connected to publishers and owners who live and work in the same communities.

Among the faces of these community journalists are those who have traveled wildly diverse journalistic paths. The list includes Randy Mankin, the 59-year-old publisher and editor of The Eldorado Success and a veteran West Texas oilman who served on Eldorado’s city council and as its part-time city administrator before he and his wife, Kathy, bought the weekly newspaper in 1994.

On March 25, 2004, the couple’s intrepid reporting helped Randy break Eldorado’s biggest story ever: The mysterious structure being built just outside town was a compound for a polygamist sect of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, not a hunting resort as visiting church leaders had said. Within days, the Mankins’ tiny newsroom was swarmed by national media.



Roy Bode, former editor of the Dallas Times Herald, took his hard-hitting newspaper skills to the Highland Lakes Newspapers group, which he ran from 2006 until July 2014.



CANULIE WHEELER

The Mankins decided early on that they would cover all local news, despite protests. At the first Schleicher County Commissioners Court meeting Randy attended as a reporter, a commissioner asked him: “Can we help you?” Mankin, legal pad in hand, said he was there to cover the public meeting. The commissioner looked at the county judge and asked: “Can he do that?” Mankin could, and still does. He also keeps a steady schedule of city council, school board, and water and hospital district meetings.

Mankin’s broad base of knowledge gives residents a unique perspective of the area’s issues, says Eldorado City Administrator Theo Melancon (mel-ON’-sawn). “What Randy provides the city of Eldorado is a treasure that not too many people understand,” Melancon said in a phone interview. “People who read the newspaper are getting a treat.”

The Mankins also own the weekly Big Lake Wildcat, which is edited by their son, J.L. Mankin. Advertising revenue is “way up,” Mankin said in a phone inter-

view, explaining that he and Kathy are leveraging their ability to sell ads for both papers. Continued financial success will boost editorial strategy. “Someone’s got to report the news and defend the right of the public to know what’s going on,” says Mankin, who in June was elected president of the Texas Press Association’s board of directors.

It’s a long-entrenched philosophy at The Rockdale Reporter, where on a Tuesday morning in late May, Publisher Kathy Cooke gives an impromptu tour of the building. There, in the cavernous back room, is the old Linotype machine, with the operator’s chair still in place at the keyboard.

And there, in the front room, are the Rockdale Reporter’s South Texas Press Association Sweepstakes awards, now totaling 17 after the newspaper collected yet another plaque in April. In Division II competition, the Reporter has won six of the last nine Sweepstakes awards—the top honor bestowed by the STPA, the largest regional press association in the U.S.

Cooke moves the tour, and the conversation, to her father’s office, where 78-year-old Bill Cooke works as publisher emeritus. “Work” is the operative word for Bill Cooke, who was named editor in 1962 and publisher in 1981. Although technically retired, he still shows up almost every day, writing a weekly column, overseeing the faith pages and helping his daughter guide the paper’s news coverage.

True to form, Bill pops into his office late morning after a workout at the gym, sitting at his computer to catch up on some work. It’s an ownership model that’s been in place since June 1, 1911, when Kathy’s great-grandfather, John Esten Cooke, published his first issue of the Rockdale paper that was founded in 1893.

What makes the paper’s coverage so special, the 54-year-old Kathy Cooke says, is that her family’s fingerprints are on every story. Her mother, Peggy Cooke, still writes stories, edits and proofreads. Her husband, Bill Martin, is sports editor. Editor Mike Brown, practically a family member, celebrated his 40th



Randy Mankin, editor and publisher of *The Eldorado Success*, helped break the West Texas town’s biggest story ever: details about the nearby Yearning for Zion Ranch compound, owned by a polygamist sect.

year at the paper in June. (Her brother, Ken Esten Cooke, named for his great-grandfather, is a former publisher of The Rockdale Reporter and now is publisher and editor of the Fredericksburg Standard Radio-Post, managed by Moser Community Media.)

In nearby Taylor, Dennis Wade oversees a different newspaper operation as president of Granite Publications, which manages 23 community papers. Granite’s newspaper revenues are up, including at the Taylor Press, of which Wade is publisher and editor.

For the 63-year-old Wade, a natty dresser who sports an assortment of bow ties, every day is spring. His forecast for community newspapers is equally optimistic. “When people are faced with too many choices, they typically go back to what they trust and understand—and that’s the community newspaper,” he says.

Too often, Wade says, metro and community newspapers are painted with the same brush strokes. “Newspapers are not dying,” he says. “The message I’d like to send is that we’re very much alive. We love what we do. We live in these communities. We work in these communities. We go to church in these communities. We are a part of the community, and we want to be part of that community for a long time.”

Camille Wheeler is an Austin writer.

Web Extras on TexasCoopPower.com

- **Model of success:** A snapshot look at four community newspaper management and ownership models in Texas.
- **Restart the presses:** When Lago Vista’s newspaper folded in 2011, a core group of citizens circulated a bold idea: Let’s start a new one.
- **Forget about that goodbye:** Shortly after the 108-year-old Paducah Post folded on May 27, Publisher Jimmie Taylor reported exciting news: Her daughter and son-in-law were producing an emailed version of the newspaper, along with 100-plus printed copies for weekly sale at the grocery store.



Trouble *in the* Kingdom



Dwindling monarch habitat threatens Texas' migratory visitors

BY EILEEN MATTEI



AFTER HANGING ON A BACK door frame in San Benito for 12 days, the pale jade-colored chrysalis had turned transparent, revealing streaks of black and orange. On a warm April morning, a monarch butterfly began to emerge. First, legs broke through the thin chrysalis and, in three long minutes, the monarch butterfly freed itself completely, although it clung to the remnants of the chrysalis.

For nine minutes, the butterfly pumped its crumpled wings, which slowly filled with fluid and straightened into the recognizable black-veined orange wings that resemble stained glass. Stepping from the wood frame to the brick wall, the monarch rested for more than four hours before flying off to feed on the nectar of nearby native plants: mistflower, lantana and scarlet sage.

If you think you have been seeing fewer monarchs, says Mike Quinn, who coordinates Monarch Watch in Texas and heads the Austin Butterfly Forum, you are right. "The monarch is not the rarest insect species, but it is the one people are most

concerned about," Quinn says. The monarch butterflies that spend summers between the Rockies and the Appalachian Mountains migrate through Texas twice a year. During September and October, the butterflies leave their summer breeding grounds in the northern Great Plains and southern Canada. The migratory pathway to their winter home in western Mexico carries them across Texas, where, like other travelers, they stop to eat. Favorite road foods include the nectar of purple coneflowers and black-eyed Susans.

In March the next year, the same monarchs that traveled south in the fall head north to Texas and adjoining states. After completing the longest round-trip insect migration known—up to 3,000 miles—they lay their eggs on milkweed plants. Those eggs hatch into caterpillars striped white, yellow and black after seven to 10 days. The caterpillars devour milkweed leaves and grow, shedding their skin five times over the next two weeks or so, and then form chrysalides. Once the butterflies emerge, like the one in San Benito, they

head north for the summer.

But monarchs, Texas' official state insect, have a problem: The 35 species of milkweed on which they lay eggs—and provide the only food source for the caterpillars—have become less abundant. The number of nectar plants the adults feed on also has decreased. Urban development in Texas annually takes out hundreds of thousands of acres that once hosted native plants like blazing stars and antelope horn milkweed.

Over the past three years, drought and high temperatures alternating with cold and rainy springs have limited monarch reproduction and survival because the butterfly's life cycle is dependent on temperature. Flight and breeding occur when temperatures are between 60 and 90 degrees. When it is colder than average, each butterfly stage takes longer: Eggs can take 20 days to mature, and the development of caterpillars and chrysalides slows, too. That cuts the number of generations that reproduce and increase the population. When it is much drier or hotter than normal, butterflies appear to lay fewer eggs, and their range shrinks as their host and nectar plants dry up. Because 2012 was too hot at critical times and 2013 was too cold, the outcome was record low overwintering numbers in those years.

The average female monarch lays 400 eggs, one egg at a time, typically on the undersides of 400 leaves. The survival rate is about 1 percent, so ideally by season's end each female that came to Texas in March could have 32 great-great-grandchildren flying back to Mexico, with all of them counting on a few dinners in Texas.

Last winter, observers estimated that only 33 million monarchs arrived in the oyamel fir forests of mountainous Michoacán, Mexico. In 1996, the monarch population there peaked at 1 billion. Yet, the butterflies have survived natural catastrophes (freezes in 2002 and 2004 killed up to 80 percent of the wintering population) and manmade ones, such as logging, which once threatened to destroy the winter retreat.

Disappearing Diet

North of Texas, the monarch population is having a much tougher time finding milkweeds. The 2007 Clean Energy Act,

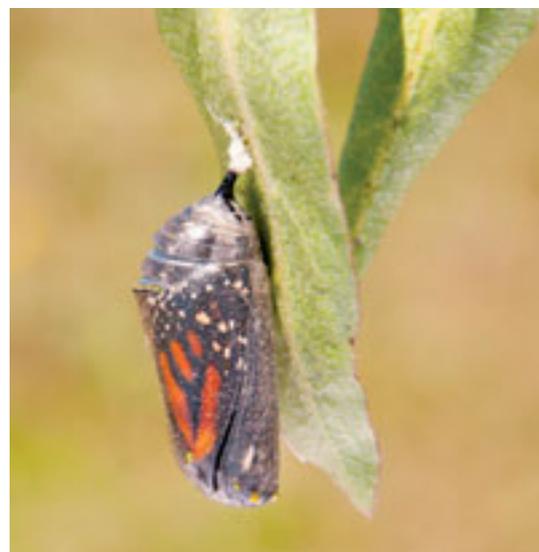
the ethanol mandate, caused corn and soybean prices to soar. As a result, approximately 24 million acres of upper Midwest grasslands and set-aside Conservation Reserve Program land have been converted to cropland. The disappearance of milkweeds and nectar plants from those acres is considered an additional blow for the emblematic butterfly.

"The monarch is iconic. Because it is so wide-ranging, it is the butterfly most Americans can relate to and identify," says Marianna T. Wright, executive director of the National Butterfly Center, which covers 100 acres along the Rio Grande in Mission. "While the monarch is a hardy butterfly and won't disappear, its migration is being affected. That appears to be linked to the disappearance of milkweed on their route."

Chip Taylor, who heads Monarch Watch based at the University of Kansas, predicts the monarch population will continue to decline unless a massive restoration effort puts milkweeds back in the Great Plains habitat and halts further milkweed loss due to urban, suburban and rural expansions. Overall, he estimates that the area of lost milkweed/monarch habitat by 2013 amounted to one-third of the butterfly's summer breeding range.

To counter these obstacles, numerous Texas groups and individuals—citizen scientists—have intervened to help monarchs on their journey. They observe migrating butterflies and report the data to organizations such as Monarch Watch, Journey North and the Monarch Larva Monitoring Project. (Migration flyways were "discovered" after citizen scientists began systematically reporting sightings.) They grow host and nectar plants at home and in public spaces. Some educate county and city officials about monarch-friendly policies for mowing and pesticide use. Taylor says citizen scientists are essential in re-establishing the monarchs' host and nectar plants. "Habitat loss has been extreme, and we need everyone to pitch in," he says.

The Native Plant Society of Texas started a Bring Back the Monarch program, which this year gave a total of \$7,500 in grants to 38 groups to purchase host and nectar plants for demonstration gardens and monarch way stations. By encouraging habitat restoration, whether through a Texas Master Naturalists' project in the Rio Grande Valley or at the Jasper Arboretum, the group is educating



OPPOSITE: When monarchs are not flitting about, they're often eating, as the one latched onto the purple cornflower is doing. **ABOVE:** Monarch caterpillars eat only from the milkweed plant, and the habitat for milkweeds has been dwindling in Texas and elsewhere. The monarch that emerges from its chrysalis is a rare survivor. The survival rate of monarch eggs is about 1 percent.

MILKWEED: ALBERT F. W. WICK | LADY BIRD: JOHNSON WILDFLOWER CENTER; CATERPILLAR: CARYN KEIFER | BIGSTOCK; CHRYSALIS: SARI ONEAL | SHUTTERSTOCK

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and involving the public.

“The monarch is a gorgeous butterfly that is speaking for all the other pollinators,” the less glamorous ones that also need host and nectar plants, says Kip Kiphart, a Texas master naturalist and retired cardiac surgeon. Kiphart has volunteered thousands of hours working with the larva monitoring project, training others and raising public awareness of the monarchs’ plight.

Although his spring monarch sightings at Cibolo Nature Center and around Boerne were scant, Kiphart was heartened by news of spectacular patches of antelope horn milkweed on the road to Guadalupe River State Park. “The amount of milkweed on farm-to-market roads this year is astounding,” he says.

The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center lists Texas native seed farms and nurseries. Many regions have native plants groups and growers who know what works

The **Texas Butterfly Festival** (November 1-4 in Mission) celebrates the end of the monarch migration and the nearly 300 butterfly species found in the Rio Grande Valley.

locally. In Junction, Bill Neiman and his family run Native American Seed Company, and he sees the demand for milkweed seed outstripping the farm’s production. “These are not domesticated plants,” he says. “We have to hand-harvest some of them, and we sell out every year.”

Climate and soil variations in Texas create 10 ecoregions, which host more than 35 varieties of milkweeds. Along with butterfly seed mixes, the farm’s catalog lists milkweeds, such as antelope horn (for drier upland areas), zizotes and butterfly weed for monarch caterpillars to munch on. Equally important are the shelter and nectar plant seeds: gay feather, Maximillian sunflower, ironweed, goldenrod and frostweed.

“Plant wildflower seeds in the fall,” Neiman advises, although the milkweed won’t sprout until spring. He regularly reminds his customers that the voracious caterpillars are going to strip their milkweeds bare. “Some people freak that bugs and caterpillars are eating their plants, and they kill the caterpillars,” he says. The chewed-up plants usually have new leaves within two weeks. Neiman recommends intentional neglect of individual plants,

but not of the monarchs’ plight.

“If we’re not doing our part here, it doesn’t matter if they fix the other parts,” he says.

The Trip Home

Monarchs build up fat reserves on their migration south, Quinn explains. “You wouldn’t think a critter crossing a continent would gain weight, but they do. The monarchs take the least strenuous way home, riding tail winds and blue northers in the fall,” on a migration flyway that stretches west to Midland.

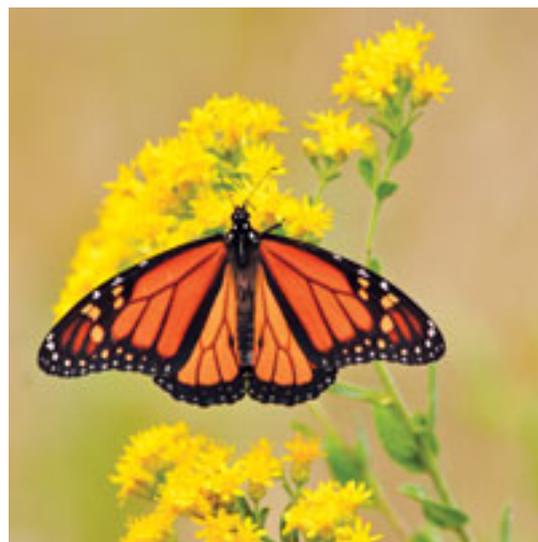
Monarchs generally do not spend the summer in Texas because milkweeds tend to dry up in the heat. But the Rio Grande Valley and the Houston/Coastal Bend area host monarchs year-round (as do areas of California and Florida). Here is where controversy rocks the butterfly garden: The

easily propagated tropical or Mexican milkweed that is so popular with monarchs in the Valley and along the coast is not considered a native plant by some purists, although it is found in Mexico. This milkweed can carry a protozoa parasite that has killed butterflies in the chrysalis. While factions debate the wisdom of planting it, monarchs continue to use tropical milkweed.

Taylor says the spring reports in 2014 coincided with cool to moderate temperatures that favor population development. “Monarch numbers will rebound, but only if the weather allows and there is enough milkweed to increase the population. Given the current size of the overwintering population, it is likely that it will take two to three years with relatively favorable breeding conditions for the population to regain its numbers,” he predicts.

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Eileen Mattei, a member of Nueces EC and Magic Valley EC, lives in Harlingen.



The distinctive bright orange coloring, with black veins and white spots, make monarchs one of the best-known butterflies. **AT TOP**, a monarch feeds on nectar from a goldenrod bloom. Monarchs pass through Texas twice a year as part of their 3,000-mile round-trip migration. In autumn, they head to Mexico, where they spend their winters clumped on oyamel firs so densely the trees appear to have orange leaves.

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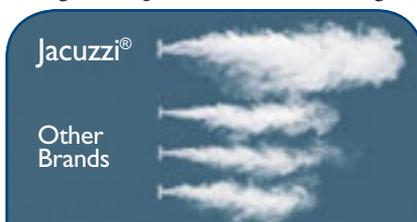
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- ➔ **Quality** - A walk-in tub is a major investment. You want to find a quality tub that will last for decades. Look for one that's 100% leak-proof, mold-resistant, full metal frame construction and one that's American made.
- ➔ **Warranty** - Ask for a lifetime "no leak guarantee." The best tubs offer a lifetime warranty on both the tub and the operating system.
- ➔ **Pain Relieving Therapy** - Find a tub that has both water and air jet therapy to soak away your aches and pains preferably with a perfectly balanced water to air mix. This tub is the first to offer a specialized foot massage experience. Its unique spinning motion provides optimal therapy to feet and legs. Best of all, you get it at no additional charge.
- ➔ **Comfort** - Insist on ergonomic design, easy-to-reach controls.
- ➔ **Endorsements** - Only consider tubs that are ETL or UL listed. Also look for a tub tested to IAPMO standards and that's USPC Certified.

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Heed Household Hazard Warnings

Household appliances and consumer products injure an estimated 33.1 million Americans every year as a result of both accidents and manufacturing errors, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

APPLIANCES: Small, portable appliances and large, stationary appliances both can pose risks to consumers and are often recalled by manufacturers for faulty wiring or shock hazards. Countertop appliances should always be unplugged when not in use to avoid overheating, as fires and electrical shocks have been reported from faulty wiring in appliances such as toasters, microwaves and mixers. Larger appliances such as refrigerators or ranges are often recalled for wiring problems. Heating appliances such as space heaters should never be left unattended or used while sleeping. Rechargeable batteries can sometimes overheat in laptop computers or other rechargeable items.

BATHROOM: Caution should be used to keep potentially harmful items out of the reach of children. All prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, herbs, cosmetics and cleaning agents should be kept out of sight and reach, and childproof or child-resistant packaging should be chosen if possible. Keep all chemicals and products in their

original packaging to ensure accurate identification of items. The Poison Prevention Packaging Act requires that child-resistant packaging be used on all medications unless the product label includes a notice that the product is intended for homes without children.

dren have access to a window. Window blind cords should be kept out of the reach of children, and there should never be a loop in the cord, as strangulation could result. Window blinds often get recalled due to strangulation incidents.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY: Households should be inspected for potential fire hazards and electrical dangers. Fire safety and fire prevention steps should be taken to ensure that appliances, extension cords and surge protectors meet all federal electrical standards. Ground-fault circuit interrupters should be used on all electrical outlets, and electrical cords should never be used if they are frayed or cracked. Outlets should never be overloaded, feel hot to the touch or give off an electrical shock. Plug protectors should be used on all unused electrical outlets to keep fingers and objects out of sockets. Lamps can pose fire hazards if they are placed near drapes or bedspreads, and appliance extension cords can cause problems if they are left plugged in for long periods of time when the appliance is not in use.

FIRE PREVENTION: To keep your family safe from fire, install smoke alarms on every level of the house and near sleeping areas. Test the smoke alarms often and remember to change the batteries regularly. Fire extinguishers should be placed in kitchens and other accessible locations in the house. Fire prevention steps can prevent the majority of accidental home fires.

TOXINS AND CHEMICALS: Many dangers in the home may be invisible to the eye, such as carbon monoxide poisoning, dry-wall fumes or lead paint hazards. Air quality can be monitored by CO₂ detectors and other devices, but dangerous air quality is often hard to identify. Chemicals such as pesticides, drain cleaners and paint should always be kept in their original containers and out of the reach of children.

COMMON HAZARDS IN THE HOME: The top five household hazards identified by the CPSC include magnets, recalled products, furniture tip-overs, windows and window coverings, and pool and spa drains. To keep homes safe, follow these safety tips:

- ▶ Keep loose magnets, magnetic pieces and other small objects away from children.
- ▶ Stay informed about product recalls.
- ▶ Check that furniture (TVs, bookcases, desks, chests, etc.) is stable or anchored to a wall.
- ▶ Don't rely on window screens to prevent falls from windows.
- ▶ Use cordless window blinds or keep cords permanently out of the reach of children.
- ▶ Inspect pools and spas for entrapment hazards and use drain covers.



Windows and blinds can pose risks for children.

original packaging to ensure accurate identification of items. The Poison Prevention Packaging Act requires that child-resistant packaging be used on all medications unless the product label includes a notice that the product is intended for homes without children.

WINDOW TREATMENTS: Windows and window treatments can pose falling or strangulation hazards. Window screens should not be expected to keep children or adults from falling out of windows, and window guards should be installed if chil-



Disaster Warning Apps

A main advantage of digital technology is its ability to provide up-to-the-minute information almost anywhere, almost anytime. Disaster-related digital applications on smartphones or tablets can be helpful when dangerous situations require emergency planning or response. Stay prepared and safe with these disaster-warning apps:

Red Cross

The American Red Cross offers several natural disaster apps including for flood, hurricane, tornado and wildfire. The apps alert users to the warning signs or immediate presence of dangerous weather, list suggested emergency kit items, locate nearby shelter options and more. All are free and available at redcross.org/prepare/mobile-apps.

Red Panic Button

This app can be activated with the touch of a big, red button. Using global positioning technology, the app sends information on the user's current location and time of activation to cellphone numbers and emails on a predesignated list. Find free download options and more information at redpanicbutton.com.

FEMA

Developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, this app contains preparedness information, an interactive checklist for emergency kits, planning for emergency meeting locations, post-disaster safety and recovery information and a map with FEMA Disaster Recovery Center locations and shelters. They are available free at fema.gov/smartphone-app.

NWS Wireless Emergency Alerts

Additionally, the National Weather Service offers a free subscription service (no app required) that sends specialized text alerts immediately to a cellphone when an extreme weather or other emergency threatens the user's immediate area. Local emergencies requiring evacuation or immediate action, Amber alerts and presidential alerts during a national emergency are also included in the service. For more information, visit nws.noaa.gov.

Keep Your Fridge Humming

The refrigerator is one of the home's biggest energy hogs. But you can help it run more efficiently by:

KEEPING IT LEVEL. A fridge on an uneven floor can lean forward enough to prevent the door gasket from sealing tightly when the door is closed.

CHECKING GASKETS. A refrigerator's door gasket can wear out over time. If your door isn't closing tightly, replace the gasket.

FILLING IT UP. A full refrigerator and freezer work more efficiently than a half-empty one. If you don't have enough food and beverages in the refrigerator, fill it with jugs of water until about two-



thirds of the empty space is taken. Same goes for the freezer: Pack bags full of ice and scatter them around in the freezer so it's at least three-quarters full.

COOLING FOOD BEFORE REFRIGERATING IT. Putting hot food into a refrigerator or freezer forces the unit to adjust temperature to compensate for the heat.

COVERING FOOD BEFORE STORING IT IN THE FRIDGE. Uncovered food and liquids release moisture and force the compressor to work harder.

MOVING IT OUT OF SUNLIGHT AND AWAY FROM THE OVEN. A fridge has to work harder to keep everything cool when the outside of it is exposed to heat.

LEAVING IT SOME BREATHING ROOM. So it can properly ventilate, the top and sides of a refrigerator need clearance between walls and cabinets around them.

CLEANING IT. Regularly wipe dust, dirt and cobwebs from the coils behind or under it.

COURTESY HOME DEPOT

The Lout I Came To Love

Emma Peel was a forbidding filly who finally turned into a trustworthy friend

BY CAROLYN BANKS

I FOUND MYSELF THINKING TODAY ABOUT Emma Peel, the last horse I owned. I used to let her goof off quite a lot when I rode her. Most riders who compete don't ever let horses do this. But sometimes I used to let Emma do total no-no's like eat grass while I was on her back, and sometimes I'd walk around on a totally loose rein with the stirrups dangling and such.

Anyway, I was thinking about how, given this, she and I so often placed in Central Texas Dressage Society schooling shows and Third Coast Eventers competitions. This is what I realized: I knew Emma totally. I knew her when she was a yearling because she was in a stall right across from Palatino, my Arabian.

Emma was a big girl, and her owners weren't really horse people. They got scared of her when she bullied them, which horses can quickly learn to do, and after that they pretty much ignored her.

I felt sorry for her. I used to pet her and talk to her and give her treats, but she was never grateful. She'd flatten her ears and twitch her tail and generally act mean and ugly, even while chomping the carrot I'd given her.

I ended up buying her kind of accidentally when she was only 2. Another rider and I heard the owners were going to sell her, and the other rider really wanted to buy her. She asked me if I could lend her the money. When I told my then-husband, he said not to make a loan. He suggested, instead, that I buy Emma and have the other rider pay me for her.

I called the other rider, but she couldn't come to the phone. So I went to the barn

and paid for Emma. Then the other rider stopped speaking to me. Finally, she told me why: "You bought that filly right out from under me," she accused, stomping away. And to make matters worse, my husband got really ticked at me, saying I'd planned the whole thing so I could buy a second horse.

It is comical now that I think about it. I had two people mad at me and owned a horse I had never wanted in the first place.

On top of all that, Emma Peel was really a lout! She would bite. She would just as soon kick you as look at you. When it came to naming her, I considered Uzi, after the submachine gun, but decided instead to use the name of the heroine in the British TV series "The Avengers." Emma Peel didn't attack everyone—just the people who deserved it.

Determined to win her over, I started out just softly touching her body with a long whip until she acknowledged that it felt kind of good. I got her to where she would accept being brushed without flipping out. I was the first person to lay a saddle on her back, and several days after that I was able to cinch the saddle's girth. I was the first person ever to sit on Emma's back (this was always an iffy proposition).

Most of Emma's life, I kept her at home. She saw me every day. I was the person who fed her. I was the person who shoveled up her poop. I was the person who could get her into a horse trailer in an orderly way, and I was the person who so gingerly drove her wherever she was going.

Emma really hated horse trailers. I



remember my vet pooh-poohing the notion that she'd go in just for me. He bulldozed her up the ramp and inside a trailer, only to have her come flying out backward even though he'd solidly latched the door. I can still see the astonished look on the vet's face as he stood there holding the now-severed door like a Viking shield while Emma ran around snorting and whinnying triumphantly.

Throughout the time I competed on her, I was her only rider, so she knew every single movement of my body and what it meant. On the ground or in the saddle, I could tilt a shoulder and Emma knew what I wanted her to do. So despite the fact that I let her goof off so much of the time, when I (or my body) said, "OK, kid, this is it. This

is the real thing," she would straighten up and really do her stuff.

She was not a top horse and I was not a top rider, but when the chips were down, she and I both were good competitors. Even years later, I still have a framed certificate for our "Outstanding Achievement" from the Central Texas Dressage Society propped up on a bookcase. It's dopey, but it's also kind of wonderful to remember the bond that Emma Peel and I had—and the way we both could gather our meager talents and, when the time was right, make them mean the most.

Carolyn Banks, a member of *Bluebonnet EC*, lives in Bastrop. She is the author of five comic mysteries based in the equestrian world, available through amberquill.com.

Grate Expectations



During sleepless, smoke-filled, weekend barbecue competitions, the meat gets all the TLC

BY MICHELE CHAN SANTOS

SHANE HILL'S COMPETITIVE BARBECUE team is called The Burn Unit.

At first glance, the team name seems like just a clever play on barbecue-related words, but the name also is a tribute to the people for whom the team raises money: burn victims and their families. The team also raises money for veterans and people afflicted with post-traumatic stress disorder.

The Burn Unit was founded in May 2013 and already has raised about \$20,000 for charities. That's a lot of brisket.

Welcome to the world of competitive barbecue in Texas, where men and women think nothing of staying up all night to perfect their ribs, brisket, sausage, chicken and beans; where the large barbecue pits can easily cost \$4,000 to \$8,000 or more; and where the competitive barbecue season runs from February to October—think spring training through the World Series, but with a lot more smoke.

Many of the teams, including The Burn Unit, support a specific charity. The Texas Firewalkers team supports victims of fire and other natural disasters. The Pit Stop BBQ team is a large organization that includes members of other barbecue teams who join together to compete at the Star of Texas Fair and Rodeo in Austin every March. Pit Stop raises money—more than \$150,000 in the past five years—for college scholarships given by Rodeo Austin.

Each competitor has his or her own reasons for entering the weekend cook-offs, usually sanctioned by the Lone Star Barbecue Society. Events are held in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana and New Mexico.

Some cooks are there for the charitable cause. Others are drawn by the camaraderie, good food and drink, and relaxed atmosphere. Still others want a formal way to prove their recipe is the best one around. “Wowing them with one bite” is how competitor Mike Sargent Jr. puts it.

For Hill, the motivation comes from a personal tragedy. On February 18, 2010, Hill was a victim of the attack at the IRS building in North Austin, when Andrew Joseph Stack III flew a small plane into the seven-story office building. Flames engulfed the building, killing an IRS employee and the pilot.

Hill, who works for the state of Texas, sustained second- and third-degree burns on his hands, face, neck and back. In the aftermath of the fire, he suffered from PTSD, and his family felt the financial and emotional strain of the disaster. “When I got burned and injured, my buddies, our community and our church supported my wife Rachel and me financially and in other ways,” Hill says. “This is a way for me to give back.”

About 25 people are part of Hill's barbecue team. They arrive in RVs to spend the night, hauling in coolers full of meat and groceries. Generally, the teams set up Thursday night, and judging takes place on Saturdays. The team has sponsors, which pay for the meat and other ingredients. The team spends about \$400 every two weeks for competition entry fees, food, drink, foil and other supplies, says Scott Ellis, a member of The Burn Unit.

Brett Boren is a barbecue cook-off team of one—Republic BBQ. Boren's day job is

working as an inside sales account manager at Dell. He's been competing since 2005. Boren is already more than halfway through the 27 barbecue competitions he plans to enter in 2014.

At the Rotary Club of Hutto's cook-off in Central Texas, April 25 and 26, Boren readies his entries (beef brisket, chicken, ribs) with the skill of long practice. On Saturday morning, with judging just a few hours away, his eyes are red from the smoke and staying up all night.

Boren's dream is to own his own barbecue trailer in two years. His face lights up as he talks: "I'd have it open four days a week, play good Texas music, serve barbecue, beer at night. That's the goal."

The secret to excellent barbecue is "TLC," Boren says. "You got to stay up a long time, watch the meat, watch the reaction. Is it folding because it's too hot? Is it seeping juice? You have to have patience."

The biggest challenge in competitive barbecue, says Brenda Sargent, the Lone

Star Barbeque Society judge who supervised the competition in Hutto, is being able to adjust to what judges in each area are looking for. "In Hutto, the judges are most familiar with barbecue cooked over apple wood or oak wood," says Brenda Sargent, Mike Sargent's mother. "In West Texas, the judges are accustomed to food cooked over mesquite wood."

Each spring, at the Star of Texas Fair and Rodeo, the roughly 50 members of the Pit Stop BBQ team (which includes Boren, The Burn Unit and the Texas Firewalkers, who join together with other cooks for the rodeo event) set up a 10,000-square-foot tent to feed hundreds of people and raise thousands of dollars in scholarship money.

James Chelf, an electrician from Lakeway, is the president of Pit Stop BBQ. "This spring, we used nine pits and cooked 250 briskets, 1,500 racks of ribs, 1,000 whole chickens and 800 pounds of sausage," says Chelf, a member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative. "We put it up on Wednesday,

started cooking on Thursday and didn't stop until Sunday morning. We were cooking 24 hours a day."

The best part of it, he said, is knowing they are raising money to help deserving students go to college. The good food and fellowship might be the next best part of competitive barbecuing.

"This is just a big family," Kevin Creamer says of his fellow Pit Stop team members. The manufacturing engineer from Elgin is a member of Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative. "It's a family that always gets along," he says. "If you need something, just call and they'll help you. We are always looking for a reason to get together and cook."

Michele Chan Santos *lives in Austin.*

Web Extras on TexasCoopPower.com

We Judge Meat, Not Sauce: Read about the art of judging at barbecue cook-offs.

SMOKING ALLOWED: Clockwise from left: Shane Hill, left, and Brett Boren discuss the coloring of pork ribs on the pit at the Rotary Club of Hutto barbecue cook-off in April. Boren gives the ribs and chicken an apple juice spritz. He says that helps keep the meat moist, and the sugar caramelizes on the surface, adding a natural sweetness. Freshly added wood in the burner keeps the fire stoked.



How a Chicago Doctor Shook Up the Hearing Aid Industry with his Newest Invention

New nearly invisible digital hearing aid breaks price barrier in affordability

Reported by J. Page

Chicago: Board-certified physician Dr. S. Cherukuri has done it once again with his newest invention of a medical grade **ALL DIGITAL affordable hearing aid**.

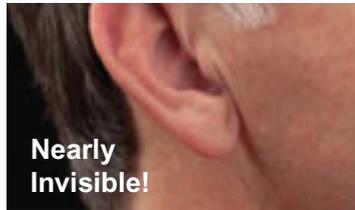
This new digital hearing aid is packed with all the features of \$3,000 competitors at a mere fraction of the cost. **Now, most people with hearing loss are able to enjoy crystal clear, natural sound—in a crowd, on the phone, in the wind —without suffering through “whistling” and annoying background noise.**

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This sleek, lightweight, fully programmed hearing aid is the outgrowth of the digital revolution that is changing our world. While demand for “all things digital” caused most prices to plunge (consider DVD players and computers, which originally sold for thousands of dollars and today can be purchased for less), yet the cost of a digital medical hearing aid remained out of reach.

Dr. Cherukuri knew that many of his patients would benefit but couldn't afford the expense of these new digital hearing aids. Generally they are *not* covered by Medicare and most private health insurance.

The doctor evaluated all the high priced digital hearing aids on the market, broke them down to their base components, and then created his own affordable version—called the MDHearingAid® AIR for its virtually invisible, lightweight appearance.



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FDA Guidance and Consumer Education

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“I would definitely recommend them to my patients with hearing loss” —Amy S., Audiologist, Munster, Indiana



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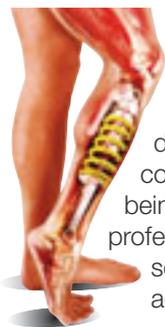


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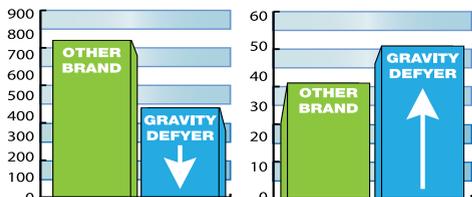
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SHOCK ABSORPTION STUDY HPW Biomechanics, 2012

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This watch doesn't do dainty. And neither do I. Call me old-fashioned, but I want my boots to be leather, my tires to be deep-tread monsters, and my steak thick and rare. Inspiration for a man's watch should come from things like fast cars, firefighters and power tools. And if you want to talk beauty, then let's discuss a 428 cubic inch V8.

Did I mention the \$59 price tag? This is a LOT of machine for not a lot of money. The *Stauer Centurion Hybrid* sports a heavy-duty alloy body, chromed and detailed with a rotating bezel that allows you to track direction. The luminous hour and minute hands mean you can keep working into the night. And the dual digital displays give this watch a hybrid ability. The LCD windows displays the time, day and date, includes a stopwatch function, and features a bright green electro-luminescent backlight. We previously offered the *Centurion* for \$199, but with the exclusive promotional code it's yours for **ONLY \$59!**

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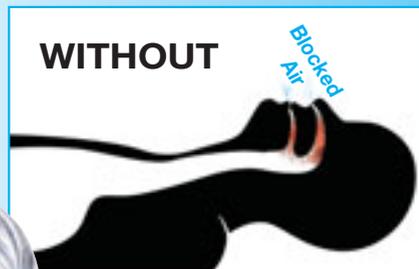
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A D V E R T I S E M E N T

Clogged, Backed—up Septic System...Can anything Restore It?

DEAR DARRYL: My home is about 10 years old, and so is my septic system. I have always taken pride in keeping my home and property in top shape. In



Dear Darryl

fact, my neighbors and I are always kidding each other about who keeps their home and yard nicest. Lately, however, I have had a horrible smell in my yard, and also in one of my bathrooms, coming from the shower drain. My grass is muddy and all the drains in my home are very slow.

My wife is on my back to make the bathroom stop smelling and as you can imagine, my neighbors are having a field day, kidding me about the mud pit and sewage stench in my yard. It's humiliating. I called a plumber buddy of mine, who recommended pumping (and maybe even replacing) my septic system. But at the potential cost of thousands of dollars, I hate to explore that option.

I tried the store bought, so called, Septic treatments out there, and they did Nothing to clear up my problem. Is there anything on the market I can pour or flush into my system that will restore it to normal, and keep it maintained?

Clogged and Smelly – El Paso, TX

DEAR CLOGGED AND SMELLY: As a reader of my column, I am sure you are aware that I have a great deal of experience in this particular field. You will be glad to know that there IS a septic solution that will solve your back-up and effectively restore your entire system from interior piping throughout the septic system and even unclog the drain field as well. **SeptiCleanse® Shock and Maintenance Programs** deliver your system the fast active bacteria and enzymes needed to liquefy solid waste and free the clogs causing your back-up.

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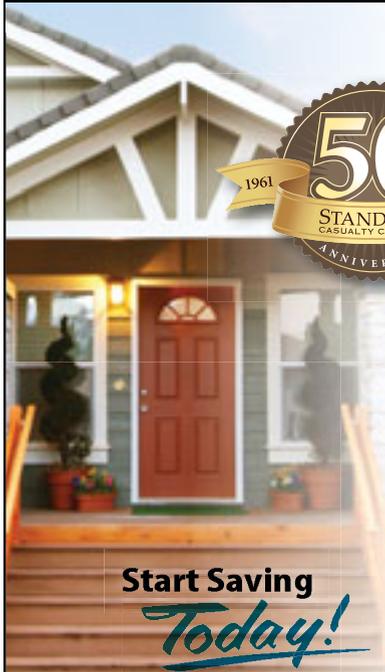
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Mining Los Almagres

Vein of truth lodged in legend
gives silver lining to centuries-old tale of certain treasure

BY CLAY COPPEDGE



THE STORY OF THE LOS ALMAGRES MINE begins in 1753 during the Spanish Colonial era in Texas when Juan Galvan launched an expedition to locate a site for a mission. Apaches told him where the kinds of riches that white men crave could be found. The place was called Cerro del Almagres, or “The Ocher Mountain,” and later simply Los Almagres. Apaches helped the Spanish find the ocher mountain, but they found no riches.

The story might have ended there, but it did not.

Three years later, Bernardo de Miranda y Flores went to Los Almagres with a small expedition and reported finding “a tremendous stratum of ore.” To make sure people were paying attention, he promised “a mine to each of the inhabitants of Texas.” He sent a 3-pound sample to Mexico City to be assayed, but officials there said they needed 30 pack mule-loads of samples to make an accurate analysis. That never happened.

The mission site Galvan had been looking for turned out to be a spot on the San Saba River, near Menard. The mission didn’t fare well, but the presidio captain, Diego Ortiz Parilla, did send some miners to Los Almagres to work the mine. Parilla estimated that every 75 pounds of ore contained an ounce and a half of silver. Alas, Comanches destroyed the San Saba mission, Parilla was reassigned, and that

would seem to be that.

But no. The story continued even into the era of Anglo settlement. Stephen F. Austin saw no harm in recounting the tales, especially for the benefit of fortune-hunting immigrants. He even included a lost silver mine on maps of the San Saba area.

Because of the connection to the San Saba mission, the story got twisted. The mission was on the San Saba River, but the mine was not. Thanks to Austin’s map, people started calling it the San Saba mine, and it attracted a new wave of fortune seekers like Jim Bowie and his brother Rezin. Over time, in step with new legends and rumors, Los Almagres also came to be called the Lost Bowie Mine.

In the early 1900s, historian Herbert E. Bolton used copies of Miranda’s journal to locate the mine, placing it in the Riley Mountains in Llano County, on the north side of Honey Creek. He was so sure of his find that he and a partner started a mining company there—but results were something short of spectacular. The mine closed two years later.

A University of Texas history student, Roderick Patton, became interested in the mine half a century later and conducted his own exhaustive review of the historical records. His conclusion: Bolton got it right.

Around that same time, Llano County rancher James Stotts discovered a group

of mines on his land, just on the other side of Honey Creek from the Bolton site at Packsaddle Mountain. He invited a friend and amateur historian named Joe Wallace to help him investigate it. They became convinced Stotts had discovered the real Los Almagres. The Texas Historical Foundation got interested and in 1998 contacted geologist S. Christopher Curran to visit the mines and offer his findings.

Curran assembled a team of historians and archaeologists that found ample evidence of three mining vintages on the Stotts Ranch, including Spanish Colonial. Curran concluded that Stotts and Wallace got it right; the fabled mine is located at Packsaddle Mountain.

“Whether the Stotts mines are, in fact, the actual mines described by Miranda may never be known with certainty, but they appear to be the right age and more closely match Miranda’s description than do any other mines,” Curran wrote in 2000. “There is substantial evidence to support a preliminary conclusion that the oldest mines at the Stotts Ranch are the Los Almagres mines.”

Though that would seem to put an end to the story, it probably won’t. Miners, as far as we know, never had great success at Los Almagres, but storytellers found the mother lode.

Clay Coppedge, a member of Bartlett EC, lives near Walburg.

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Staff Favorites

Texas Co-op Power designated September's theme "Staff Favorites." We put ourselves in our readers' shoes and submitted our favorite recipes for judging. In this case, the recipes faced a jury of our peers, but we treated the recipes the same way we treat the ones you send us.

As with reader recipes, ranking is done mindfully and with gratitude toward each person who shares a recipe. They are prepared, tasted and ranked in order of preference. Most often, a select few recipes rise to the top.

The staff favorite this month was the Banana Strawberry Trifle, made by Lilah Bevins, 15, daughter of Martin Bevins, who is the vice president of communications and member services. Test tasters concluded the dessert was refreshing, light and would make a nice end to any meal.

Coming in second place was Creative Manager Andy Doughty's Parmesan Bacon Onion Dip. The appetizer's flavor and texture belied its simple ingredients. I found myself mentally planning get-togethers around it before I'd left the taste-testing room.

Although only a handful of recipes are printed on the magazine pages this month, we're sharing all our staffs' favorite dishes—along with an archive of about 450 reader-submitted recipes—on TexasCoopPower.com.

But first, you've got to try this trifle.

ANNA GINSBERG, FOOD EDITOR



TERRIFIC TRIFLE: Lilah Bevins' Banana-Strawberry Trifle tastes every bit as good as it looks. The trifle earned the most votes at the taste-testing of our own staff favorite recipes.

Banana-Strawberry Trifle

MARTIN BEVINS, VP COMMUNICATIONS & MEMBER SERVICES

- 1 large box vanilla pudding
- 1 box yellow cake mix
- 2 cups heavy cream
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 6 bananas
- 2 pints strawberries, washed and stemmed

➤ Prepare pudding according to directions on box.

- Bake cake according to directions on box. Allow to cool.
- Whip heavy cream with sugar to form soft peaks.
- Thinly slice fruit. Cut cake into small cubes.
- Layer cake cubes on bottom of trifle dish. Add a layer of vanilla pudding. Arrange bananas and strawberries on top of pudding. Spread whipped cream in a thin layer over fruit.
- Repeat layers: cake-pudding-fruit-whipped cream.
- Chill and serve.

Servings: 10. Serving size: 1 slice. Per serving: 425 calories, 5.72 g protein, 26.76g fat, 39.57 g carbohydrates, 2.99 g dietary fiber, 232 mg sodium, 27.63 g sugars, 125 mg cholesterol



Parmesan Bacon Onion Dip

Parmesan Bacon Onion Dip

ANDY DOUGHTY, CREATIVE MANAGER

- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 cup Parmesan cheese
- 1 cup finely chopped onions
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 4 slices thin-cut bacon, cooked and crumbled
- 1 teaspoon fresh ground black pepper

- > Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
- > Mix all ingredients together evenly.
- > Pour mixture into 1-quart baking dish and bake 25-40 minutes, until top is deeply browned but not burnt.
- > Serve warm with chips, chunks of bread or veggies for dipping.

Servings: 14. Serving size: 3 ounces. Per serving: 210 calories, 4.22 g protein, 19.43 g fat, 2.05 g carbohydrates, 0.22 g dietary fiber, 285 mg sodium, 1.08 g sugars, 24 mg cholesterol

Creamy Chicken Tortilla Soup

TAMI KNIPSTEIN, LOSS CONTROL COORDINATOR

- 3 pounds chicken breast, cubed
- ½ cup chopped cilantro
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 6 medium tomatoes, chopped
- 48 ounces mild picante sauce
- 26 ounces cream of chicken soup
- 26 ounces cream of mushroom soup
- Pepper to taste
- Tortilla chips
- Mild cheddar cheese, finely shredded
- Avocados, sliced

- > In a large pot, boil chicken in 8 cups of water with cilantro and garlic. Once chicken is fully cooked, add

- tomatoes and picante sauce and cook for 15 minutes.
- > Add cream of chicken and cream of mushroom soups and pepper to taste. Let simmer for an additional 30 minutes.
- > Serve over crushed tortilla chips, and top with cheese and avocado slices. Makes 7 quarts.

Servings: 28. Serving size: 8 ounces. Per serving: 148 calories, 12.61 g protein, 4.55 g fat, 10.17 g carbohydrates, 2.2 g dietary fiber, 748 mg sodium, 3.6 g sugars, 35 mg cholesterol

Redneck Dip

KELLEY MARKERT, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

- 1 tube (16 ounces) hot Jimmy Dean sausage
- 3 cans (30 ounces) Rotel tomatoes and peppers (mild or spicy)
- 4 packages (64 ounces) cream cheese

- > Brown sausage, drain grease and return sausage to pan.
- > Mix in cream cheese and Rotel until melted and smooth.
- > Serve with tortilla chips.

Servings: 24. Serving size: 4 ounces. Per serving: 327 calories, 8.4 g protein, 26.98 g fat, 4.36 g carbohydrates, 0 g dietary fiber, 526 mg sodium, 2.43 g sugars, 98 mg cholesterol

Macadamia White Chip Raspberry Cheesecake Bars

ANNA GINSBERG, FOOD EDITOR

- 1 package (16 ounces) refrigerated white chip macadamia flavored cookie dough
- 4 ounces white chocolate, chopped
- 16 ounces cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ⅓ cup raspberry preserves

- > Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Line a 13-by-9-inch metal pan with nonstick foil or parchment paper.
- > Separate cookie dough portions and spread evenly across the bottom of the pan. Press together to form a crust that covers the bottom of the pan.
- > Put the white chocolate in a microwave-safe bowl and heat at 50 percent power, stirring every 30 seconds until melted and smooth.
- > In a large bowl, beat cream cheese and sugar with an electric mixer. Stir in melted white chocolate. With mixer on low speed, add eggs one at a time, beating gently until mixed. Add vanilla and stir until mixed. Do not overbeat.
- > Pour mixture over unbaked cookie dough.
- > Place raspberry preserves in a small dish and microwave for about 10 seconds to soften. Spoon gobs of raspberry over cream cheese mixture and swirl through for marbled effect.
- > Bake 37-40 minutes or until edges brown slightly. Center

of bars will be slightly wiggly.

- > Let cool at room temperature for 2 hours, then transfer to refrigerator to chill thoroughly.
- > When bars are chilled, lift from pan by grasping foil or parchment. Set on a cutting board and cut into 24 bars.

Servings: 24. Serving size: 1 bar. Per serving: 219 calories, 2.89 g protein, 12.09 g fat, 22.67 g carbohydrates, 0.48 g dietary fiber, 111 mg sodium, 9.82 g sugars, 41 mg cholesterol

Italian Meatballs

MARTIN BEVINS, VP COMMUNICATIONS & MEMBER SERVICES

- 1 pound ground pork
- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 small yellow onion, diced
- 1 cup minced parsley
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 cups bread crumbs
- 2 eggs, gently whisked
- 5 ounces Romano cheese, shredded
- 5 ounces Parmesan cheese, shredded
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon salt

- > Mix all ingredients in a large mixing bowl until well

combined. Roll into golf ball-sized meatballs and place on broiling pan.

- > Broil about 10 minutes, rotating to prevent burning.
- > Once crisp, add meatballs to your favorite Italian sauce and simmer awhile before serving.

Servings: 36-60 meatballs, depending on size. Serving size: 6-8 meatballs. Per serving: 463 calories, 28.57 g protein, 22.52 g fat, 30.71 g carbohydrates, 2.33 g dietary fiber, 1,115 mg sodium, 3.5 g sugars, 117 mg cholesterol

\$100 Recipe Contest

February's recipe contest topic is **All Things Chocolate**. Seasonal celebrations of romance usually feature chocolate on the dessert menu. What are your favorites? The deadline is **September 10**.



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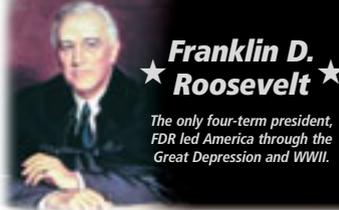
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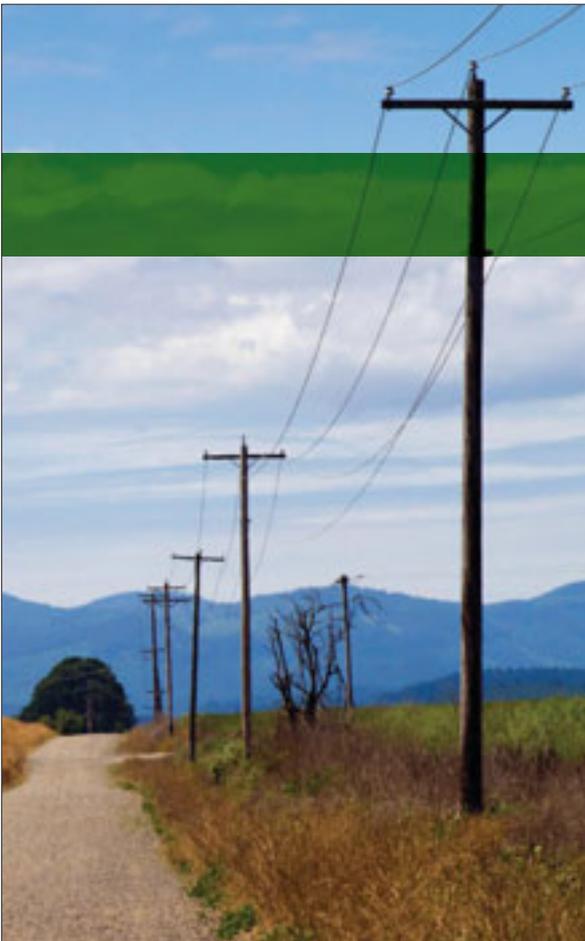
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▲ Cousins **Tommy Orsak, Evan Packard** and **Aiden Dowdle** exude boundless energy on a summer day. **Thomas Orsak** of Guadalupe Valley EC, their grandfather, sent in the photo.

◀ **David Costello**, Pedernales EC, found old and modern methods of harnessing the wind south of Sweetwater.

▼ CoServ Electric's **Robert Schumann** shows us a massive transmission line backlit by a warm sunrise on a cold February morning.



▲ Jackson EC's **Charles Aschenbeck** captures nature's energy: lightning crashing over downtown Schulenburg.

▼ 'While most everyone else was watching the release of the Kemp's Ridley sea turtle hatchlings at sunrise, this child was energized by the waves rolling into the beach,' says **Debbie Martz**, Nueces EC.



Upcoming Contests

November Issue: Trains, Planes & Automobiles *Deadline: September 10*

December: Bad Santa **January: Hats**

All entries must include name, address, daytime phone and co-op affiliation, plus the contest topic and a brief description of your photo. **ONLINE:** Submit highest-resolution digital images at TexasCoopPower.com/contests. **MAIL:** Focus on Texas, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701. 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. We do not accept entries via email. We regret that Texas Co-op Power cannot be responsible for photos that are lost in the mail or not received by the deadline.

Pick of the Month
Pioneer Day

Paducah [September 13]
(806) 346-7179, facebook.com/saltblockart
The Friends of Cottle County's annual family festival offers barbecue, cowboy events, games, music, vendors and a salt block art contest. Note: Only salt blocks licked into unusual shapes by cattle, horses, deer or other animals are eligible for the contest.



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September

6
Castroville 170th Birthday Celebration of Castroville, (830) 538-9838

12
Gainesville [12-14] The Sky's the Limit Balloon Spectacular, (940) 612-8463, theskysthelimit.org

Amarillo [12-20] Amarillo Tri-State Fair & Rodeo, (806) 376-7767, tristatefair.com

13
Denton Guided Tour of the North Texas Horse Country, (940) 382-7895, horsecountrytours.com

Sanger Sanger Sellabration, (940) 458-3050

Tenaha Festival Along the Tracks, (936) 248-2681

Brenham [12-20] Washington County Fair, (979) 836-4112, washingtoncofair.com

14
Kaufman St. Ann Catholic Church Fall Festival, (972) 962-3247, stannkaufman.org

18
Fairview Brighten the Night Wine Tasting, (469) 600-8421, carsonscrusadersfoundation.org

Fredericksburg Food Pantry Golf Tournament, (830) 456-2506

19
Marshall [19, 20] Jeans 'n Classics Concert, (903) 935-4484, marshallartscouncil.org

20
Athens Uncle Fletch Hamburger Festival, (903) 677-5333, athenstx.org

Corpus Christi Bay Conquer the Coast Bike Ride, (361) 749-5919, conquerthecoast.org

Springtown Wild West Festival, (817) 220-7828, springtownchamber.org

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texasredsfestival.com



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and festivals around Texas. For a complete listing, please visit TexasCoopPower.com/events.



September 12
Gainesville
The Sky's the Limit
Balloon Spectacular

26

Post Oak [26-27] Busy Bee Quilt Show, (940) 567-2771, postoakquilters.com

Trinity [26-27] Community Fair, (936) 594-3501, trinitycommunityfair.com

27

Grand Prairie The Flight of the Monarch Celebration, (972) 237-8107, grandfunp.com

Lakehills Medina Lake Cajun Festival, (830) 751-2727, cajunfestival-medinalake.com

Mansfield Wisteria Street Market, (817) 453-5420, mansfieldparks.com

Waco Heart of Texas Airshow, (303) 862-2869, heartoftexasairshow.com

28

Giddings Wendish Fest, (979) 366-2441, texaswendish.org

Victoria Czech Heritage Festival, (361) 578-6730, victoriaczechs.org

30

Kenney [30-10/4] Hodges Farm Antique Show, (979) 865-9077, hodgesfarmtexas.com

October

3

Brownfield [3-4] Harvest Festival, (806) 637-2564, brownfieldchamber.com

Gonzales [3-5] Come and Take It Festival, (830) 672-6532, gonzalestexas.com

4

Bastrop Lost Pines Art & Music Festival, (512) 321-8055, bastropfineartsguild.com

El Campo Chamber Prairie Days Festival, (979) 543-2713, elcampoprairiedays.com

4

Huntsville Fair on the Square, (936) 295-8113, chamber.huntsville.tx.us

Memphis Steak Cook-Off, (806) 259-3144, memphistxchamberofcommerce.com

Submit Your Event!

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



September 20
Athens
Uncle Fletch
Hamburger Festival

BALLOONS: BALEFIRE9 | BIGSTOCK.COM. BURGER: © ANTEROXX | DREAMSTIME.COM

14TH ANNUAL Renewable Energy ROUNDUP & Sustainable Living Expo
Bell County Expo Center - Belton, TX Sept. 26, 27, & 28

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www.theroundup.org #TXRoundup2014

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Martin Dies Jr. State Park: Nature preserve near Jasper beckons as trees along B.A. Steinhagen Lake sprinkle Piney Woods with bursts of fall colors

BY ERIC POHL



PARK'S SEASONAL PALETTE: In the fall at Martin Dies Jr. State Park, visitors can take to the water on B.A. Steinhagen lake or one of the three hiking trails (totaling 16 miles) to enjoy the golden hues of beech trees, the red shades of gums and oaks, and the evergreen pines.



EVERY FALL SOMETHING MAGICAL HAPPENS at Martin Dies Jr. State Park. Deep in the East Texas Piney Woods, the calm, glassy waters of B.A. Steinhagen Lake reflect the changing of the seasons. From the sweet gum and maple-lined banks to the bald cypress punctuating the lake's scenic expanses, fall casts a warm palette of reds, oranges and yellows throughout the park.

Located at the northern edge of the Big Thicket near Jasper, two hours northeast of Houston, the park has several units, all accessible via U.S. Highway 190, which bisects the lake on a scenic two-mile stretch of road.

For me, this time of year is particularly enchanting for hiking the park's wooded nature trails. It's a time to slow down and take pause, as nostalgic sights and sounds of fall abound. The seasonal songs of migratory birds harmonize with the percussive crunch of newly fallen leaves beneath your feet as the gently rustling canopy applauds overhead.

Among the park's 705 acres, my favorite spot for fall color is the Island Trail—a remarkable 0.8-mile loop amid stands of

red maple, sweet gum and a variety of hardwoods. Along the trail, I'm able to glimpse views of wetland areas that cradle the island. Don't miss the elevated wooden footbridge connecting the island to the wildlife management area that adjoins the park. "From this bridge there is a panoramic view of the foliage," says Park Superintendent David Weeks.

While crossing the bridge, keep a keen eye out for the occasional bald eagle soaring overhead.

Looking from land is just one way to enjoy the seasonal color. The park's centerpiece, B.A. Steinhagen Lake, beckons kayakers and canoeists to roam up to 16 miles of designated paddling trails or embark on their own exploration of the meandering backwater sloughs. Like the overland trails, a synchronous soundtrack of wind and gentle waters rushing under the canoe kindle a calming effect. The lake is surrounded by pristine hardwoods flaunting bursts of color and dotted with spectacular stands of rust-colored bald cypress trees and a patchwork of small islands.

Just north of the park, the confluence of the Angelina and Neches rivers forms a swampy labyrinth known as The Forks. "It's an undeveloped river-bottom habitat that is rare to find these days," says Weeks. The park offers canoe rentals and guided canoe trips through The Forks area.

The park's trails, inlets and wetland areas are ripe with recreational opportunities. Campsites line the banks of the lake, offering a relaxing, shaded retreat. Those who like their nature on two wheels can bring bikes for use on the trails and park roads. Anglers will appreciate the various fishing amenities. The park has five piers and numerous bank fishing opportunities for visitors, and five boat ramps for boaters to access the lake, says Weeks. The popular species of fish caught are catfish, crappie and bass.

Whether you drive up for the fall color or settle in for a weeklong camping trip, you'll enjoy the quiet splendor of Martin Dies Jr. State Park.

Eric Pohl is a writer/photographer in Austin.

Info: Call (409) 384-5231 or visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/martin-dies-jr.



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