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FOR CECA MEMBERS

SEPTEMBER 2023

Mum's the Word

Kisha Clark makes no
secret of her network
of mum-makers





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September 2023



08

Bigger and Better—Together

Makers grow Texas' colorful homecoming mum tradition—and their own skills—by working cooperatively.

Story by Kristen Pettineo
Photos by Wyatt McSpadden

ON THE COVER

Kisha Clark, right, with Lundyn Byrd, whom she mentored in the art of mum-making.

ABOVE

Materials that will blossom into mums.

Photos by Wyatt McSpadden

12 Dance Hall Darlings

After decades of rocking the countryside, the beloved Triumphs take a final bow.

Story and photo by Erich Schlegel

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By Pam LeBlanc

Planter Banter

RESEARCHERS HAVE LEARNED that plants “talk,” using a process called cavitation, when tiny bubbles burst and produce mini shock waves inside a plant’s vascular system. Sort of like what happens in your joints when you crack your knuckles.

Nice to meet you.



Come here often?



“There’s two kinds of coaches: Them that’s fired and them that’s gonna be fired.”

—BUM PHILLIPS

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

My favorite swimming hole is ...

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

Here are some of the responses to our July prompt: **Darkness is only scary when ...**

You’re 91 years old, living alone a mile from a neighbor, the power goes out and you can’t find your cellphone.

HAROLD R. CLARK
NUECES EC
KINGSVILLE

It’s the bottom of your empty bag of chocolates.

MONICA MILLER
COSERV
CARROLLTON

You’re 10 years old and have to go to the outhouse at night.

NORMA KRANZ
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES
SOMERVELL COUNTY

You feel something furry and you know the dog is outside.

GAYLA LEECH
CECA
ALBANY

You can’t see what is making noise and coming toward you.

BOBBY REA
TRINITY VALLEY EC
ELKHART

Visit our website to see more responses.

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LIGHTBULB MOMENT

Here's a reading recommendation for children that will enlighten them about how rural electrification changed America for the better.

Wish Upon a Crawdad takes place in 1940 Oregon. It tells the tale of 12-year-old Ruby Mae Ryan, whose family is about to get electricity for the first time thanks to the electric cooperative formed by her parents and neighbors and who is trying to earn enough money to buy a surprise gift for her mother.

"I hope kids will take away a greater appreciation for all the wonderful things they can do because of electricity," says author Curtis Condon, a retired co-op magazine editor.



In a Manner of Speaking

KINDLY NOTE that Austin is the politest American city.

That's according to a survey of more than 1,500 residents of the 30 largest metropolitan areas in the U.S. Preply, a language learning app and e-learning platform, conducted the survey.

Fort Worth ranks third.

Pardon us for saying so, but the same survey lists Houston as the 10th-rudest city.

September 4

National Newspaper Carrier Day

"Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter." So said Thomas Jefferson.



JULIA ROBINSON

JULY 2023 'I Love All the Love Here'

“As a parent of an autistic child who participated in Camp CAMP for many years, I was overjoyed to see this fine organization recognized in your magazine.”

MARTIN GIBLIN
PEDERNALES EC
SPRING BRANCH

Knowing Natives

Native grasses? Really? The first grass you list (Johnson grass) was imported from Turkey [*Ranchland Revival*, July 2023]. I can remember my father cursing it and the man it was named for when I was a boy. It is listed as a noxious weed in 19 states and under certain circumstances becomes deadly to cattle and horses.

Jim Evans
Victoria EC
Port Lavaca

EDITOR'S NOTE Sharp eye, Jim. Rancher Jon Taggart has planted Johnson grass until native grasses become established, but it's not native to Texas.

My grandmother was one of the original Rangerettes [*Kilgore's Kickers*, June 2023].

HOLLY ANTHONY
VIA FACEBOOK

Historical Details

I had never known about the post-revolution battles with Mexico [*Second Sacking*, July 2023]. I also learned a new word or two from the author.

Keith Brown
Pedernales EC
Lago Vista

I noticed a discrepancy. At the end it says the two attacks on Texas drove the Texians to join the United States six years after the Mexican

attacks in 1842. That would make it 1848 when Texas joined the U.S. In school, we learned that Texas joined the U.S. on December 29, 1845. Did I miss something somewhere?

Bill Beverly
Trinity Valley EC
Canton

EDITOR'S NOTE Our mistake, Bill. Texas joined the U.S. three years after the 1842 attacks. The story has been corrected on our website.

Old-School Luxury

These fantastic hotels are true reminders of old-school luxury and comfort [*Sleeping Giants*, July 2023]. I recommend stepping out and trying all these magnificent hotels.

Bill Koenig
Fayette EC
West Point



COURTESY GAGE HOTEL

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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Austin, TX 78701

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

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Mums Inc.
Homecoming Mum Professionals

Makers grow Texas' colorful homecoming mum tradition—and their own skills—by working cooperatively

BIGGER AND BETTER—TOGETHER

Homecoming season is upon us.

How can you tell? Well, there's football, for sure. And the unflinching heat finally starts standing down. But maybe the biggest—BIGGEST—clues are the over-the-top mum assemblies that high school students flaunt in the name of school spirit and Texas tradition.

It used to be that homecoming mums meant corsages, a nice arrangement easily pinned to a dress. But sometime in the 1970s, Texas mums became Texas-sized—extravagant masses of ribbons, buttons, charms and bells.

Families could spend hours creating them. Or they can turn to someone like Kisha Clark, for whom mums are serious business. Just don't call them cute.

"When I hear someone call my mum business cute, that's like nails on a chalkboard to me," Clark says, laughing. "This isn't a hobby. I'm not just throwing glitter at the kitchen table. Mums are works of art. I take them seriously, and I take my business seriously, too."

So seriously that Clark launched Mums Inc., a professional organization for mum-makers. Clark, who lives in Providence Village, near Denton, believes there's power in numbers and in working cooperatively—whether it's for sourcing materials in bulk, staying on top of new trends, referring customers or building skills.

"Really anything," Clark said. "When I first got started making mums, the business was competitive. But I think



we're better together. I mean, doctors have professional membership organizations. Attorneys do too. But nobody was talking about the mum industry this way. Why not?"

Clark, a member of CoServ, an electric cooperative based in the Metroplex, has been in the mum business for more than 20 years, first learning the trade from her grandmother while growing up near Fort Cavazos (formerly Fort Hood) in Killeen. She loved making mums in high school but never dreamed of making a career of them. Instead, she went to college and studied something totally different: cybersecurity.

But she wasn't out of the mum business for long.

"It was 2002. I was 23 years old and driving home from my first cybersecurity job in Plano, and I passed a school with a big sign out front," Clark said. "It said something about picking up homecoming mums, and I suddenly

OPPOSITE Kisha Clark, a cybersecurity expert, is fully immersed in the mum-making business.

RIGHT A vast array of ribbons serves as Clark's palette.



remembered how much I loved making them in high school. I thought, ‘Hey, I could do that.’ And from that moment, I became kind of obsessed with learning the business and making mums again.”

Clark scoured the internet to source supplies, get a better understanding of the market and network with other mum-makers. But in the early 2000s, information was scarce online. The mum business was driven mostly by word-of-mouth referrals, and it could be tough to get a foothold.

Clark saw an opportunity. With her unique combination of crafting skills and computer expertise, she says she became one of the first mum-makers to sell supplies, mum kits and custom mum designs on the internet.

Her first year was slow. She sold just two mums. But each homecoming season, Clark’s customer base grew, and within just a few years, it became less a hobby and more a bona fide side hustle. Today that business, DK Florals, produces 30–35 mums every season. Some take up to 24 hours of work, and they sell for anywhere from \$250 to well over \$800.

Maybe it’s because of Clark’s day job—managing a team of engineers—or maybe it’s because she’s a self-described leader by nature. But as her mum business grew more successful, Clark felt like there was potential for something much bigger.

“I was talking to another mum-maker friend,” Clark says. “She needed some supplies, and we ended up trading some items we both needed. We got to talking about the business, and we realized we needed to create some kind of network.”

“When I first got started making mums, the business was competitive. But I think we’re better together.”

That’s when Mums Inc. was born. It started as a Facebook group for mum-makers in 2012, but the conversation kept getting bigger.

“We started buying supplies together, which got us a better cost,” Clark says. “And as our numbers grew, we began teaching marketing. And from there, it just took off.”

Before long, Clark was hosting events for Mums Inc. members and leading in-person and virtual classes. What started as a homegrown Facebook group has now spun into a full-fledged professional membership organization with 188 members from all over Texas and some from Oklahoma, New Mexico and Florida. For an annual fee of \$35, mum-makers become part of a professional network, gaining access to its tips and techniques, resources, and referrals.



FROM OPPOSITE Clark shows Lundyn Byrd some of her techniques for crafting a mum. Byrd, a 2023 Aubrey High School graduate, has had her own mum business for three years. Mums can easily weigh 10 pounds and sometimes twice that.

friends' high school-aged kiddos needed a mum or a garter, they'd call me and I'd do it."

Clark saw McGlothin's work and saw the potential for a business. She reached out through Facebook and encouraged McGlothin to consider joining Mums Inc.

"That's when I realized that this could be more than just a hobby," McGlothin says. "I was just barely breaking even at the time, and I wasn't really approaching this as an entrepreneur. And now I have a profitable business."

But mostly, McGlothin is grateful that there's a group of skilled artisans passing down a Texas tradition.

"In our group, there are so many years of professional mum-making experience," she says. "We have people who have been making mums for their kids and grandkids, going back decades. That kind of experience is priceless—and it's being handed down generation by generation in our group. We share braiding techniques, know-how and new trends. I find it all incredibly valuable.

"And I'm glad it's not getting lost."

For Clark, that kind of connection embodies the potential she envisioned when she started the mum collective. Yes, the big, beautiful mums themselves are the end product. But for Clark, Mums

Inc. is really about people reaching their potential and building a community.

"Whether I'm managing engineers or leading Mums Inc., deep down, it's about people growth," Clark says. "I like to see people beyond what they see in themselves. Mums Inc. was like a bunch of flower seeds. They were going to grow, but now they're in the same pot, growing together. And now we have this beautiful rainforest."

Clark takes pride in knowing Mums Inc. members can help put their children through college, pay for family vacations or leave their jobs—because of mums.

"Yes, I love mums," Clark says. "But my joy? It's in seeing this community succeed." ■

Mums Inc. has its own TikTok account where Clark shares social media marketing expertise. After all, the video-sharing social media network is practically tailor-made for showing off her big, colorful, ornate designs. And these days, most of Clark's Generation Z customers are on there, too.

"TikTok has been great for us, but this is about so much more," Clark says. "This is about us being taken seriously and giving people the tools they need to realize their full potential. And we're not just a bunch of crafty moms. We're businesswomen."

Erica Muñoz McGlothin, a mum-maker and Mums Inc. board member, wholeheartedly agrees. The Temple mom began making mums for friends and family as a hobby.

"I'm kind of a creative person by nature," she explains. "I love the pageantry of it. I love that it's so Texas. So when my

Dance Hall Darlings

After decades of rocking the countryside, the beloved Triumphs take a final bow

IT ALL BEGAN in the summer of 1959 in Rosenberg, southwest of Houston. Tim Griffith's dad was a traveling salesman and came home one day with a used electric guitar and amp.

Obviously, the younger Griffith needed a band.

"I played saxophone in the nearby Needville High School band," Don Drachenberg says. "We got a few other friends together, and next thing you know, we're playing our first gig in January of 1960. A sock hop in Richmond."

Band member Denny Zatyka's dad was a distributor for Lone Star beer and allowed the teens—the Triumphs—to practice in a beer warehouse, Drachenberg says. "Through the years we all had regular jobs," he says. "I became an American history high school teacher; Denny inherited the Lone Star beer distributorship; Tim Griffith was a civil engineer; Teddy Mensik worked in a machine shop; and Gary Koeppen was an insurance salesman."

In 1966 the band recorded the Hank Williams tune *I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry*, sung by another founding member, B.J. Thomas. It became a national hit. The song launched a solo career for Thomas, a Grammy winner whose hit songs included *Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head* and *Hooked on a Feeling*.

From there the Triumphs started playing the Central Texas dance hall circuit, through the '60s and into the '70s, bringing their rock tunes to dance halls in towns including Brenham, East Bernard, El Campo, Hillje, La Grange, Schulenburg, Shiner, Tate and Weimar.

Dance hall historian Gary E. McKee, editor of *Texas Polka News*, says Saturday nights were for rock 'n' roll dances; Sunday afternoons were for polka bands and an older crowd. On Friday nights, of course, folks were busy with high school sports.

Through the 1960s, the Triumphs were among the best-known circuit bands in Central Texas, along with the Barons and Roy Head and the Traits.

By 1980, as the world embraced disco and the Triumphs missed spending time with their families after more than a decade of working weekends and holidays, the band took a break. They regrouped in 1992.

But on a chilly Saturday night this past February, the Triumphs took their final bow in appropriate surrounds: at Swiss Alp Hall near Schulenburg in Fayette County. Sixty-three years after that first sock hop in Richmond, they played their last show.

Butch Bosak was there—along with about 450 loyal fans. Bosak played guitar with the Barons way back when. "When we were playing, we owned the place," he says. "We competed with [the Triumphs], but they were always family to us. We'd go to their New Year's Eve dances. Now that they are gone, there is a void."

"These old dance halls have wooden floors on pier-and-beam foundations," Drachenberg explains. "The floor would bounce like crazy when our fans danced and stomped to our music. The floors were going 'whoomph! whoomph!' We had big speakers stacked on top of each other in front of the stage, and we figured we better tie them down so they don't fall down on our fans."

Jonathan Socha, owner of Lee County Peanut Co., followed the Triumphs through the ages. "If you weren't soaking wet with sweat from dancing, you weren't having a good time," he says. "Swiss Alp was basically a hay barn with windows. We sweated our tails off."

Sandy Randolph grew up in Smithville. She would catch a ride with friends to any performance nearby. "I started sneaking into the dances when I was 13," she says. "The shows were the big social gathering of our area."

The Triumphs played at lifelong fan Catherine Poppe's 50th wedding anniversary.

"They play all kinds of music, they attract all kinds of people," says Poppe, who retired from Fayette Electric Cooperative in 2021. "It's just truly amazing the draw that this band has, and now they're going to be part of history."

Over the past few years, as the band's members aged, "the band lost its family feeling," Drachenberg says. "We discussed that it might be time to stop."

Co-founder and lead guitarist Tim Griffith died in December 2022. "Tim's death was the exclamation point on our decision to hang it up," says Drachenberg, 81, a member of Fayette EC. "Our band had a magical *something*. From that magic, our fan base grew and grew. It was great to see fans that have been following us for 60 freaking years.

"We had a hell of a run."

During intermission of the final performance, McKee presented the Triumphs with an honor from Texas Dance Hall Preservation.

"It was bittersweet," McKee says. "They played the soundtrack of my life." ■



The Triumphs play their final show February 18 at Swiss Alp Hall near Schulenburg.

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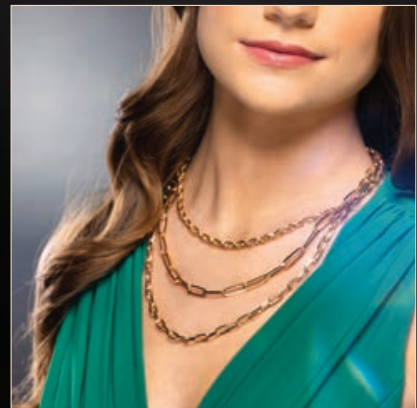
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MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER

ALAN LESLEY

The Difference Between Conservation and Efficiency

THE TERMS ENERGY conservation and energy efficiency are often used interchangeably, but they have distinct definitions. I like how the U.S. Energy Information Administration differentiates the two based on behavior and technology.

Energy conservation is a behavior—using less energy. To achieve it, consumers have to change their habits: Turn off lights, unplug appliances or opt to use a clothesline instead of a clothes dryer. Conserving energy often means sacrificing something.

While there’s great merit in adopting habits that conserve energy, we also have the option to use less energy without having to give up comfort or convenience.

That brings me to the definition of energy efficiency: applying technology to use less energy while getting the same result or service.

Energy Star-rated products are intended to deliver the performance consumers expect while using less energy. Take today’s Energy Star-rated refrigerators, for example. They keep food cool with about half as much energy as older models.

Ultimately, energy efficiency may result in energy conservation—or using less energy.

Smart electricity usage is important to CECA because it’s beneficial to you, our members.

For one, using less electricity saves you money on your electric bill simply because you consume less. But it also benefits the co-op as a whole because wholesale power costs fluctuate depending on the time of use.

You see, the cost of power increases during peak hours—typically from 3 to 8 p.m. during the summer. This is energy conservation in action: If members try their best to use less power during those hours, the

cooperative’s total wholesale power cost decreases. Those savings are passed along to you.

In addition, those in the electricity industry, including CECA, are trying to find ways to reduce consumption in case of potential electric generation shortfalls in the future. Maintaining energy-conscious habits and adopting energy-efficient technologies now will help us use electricity more wisely down the road.

I encourage you to apply the principles of energy conservation and energy efficiency together. Just because you install an LED in the light fixture on your front porch doesn’t mean you should leave it on 24/7. And even if you have an Energy Star-rated clothes dryer, be a good steward and think twice about running it half-full or during those peak hours.

By combining energy-efficient technology with conservation-minded behavior, you can save electricity and money. ■



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Technological advances allow us to automatically perform some actions we used to have to do manually. Because newer appliances are able to do the same tasks with less energy, energy efficiency doesn’t necessarily mean going without.

An LED is considered energy efficient because it uses less electricity to produce the same amount of light as an incandescent bulb. In the same way,



DEAN MITCHELL | ISTOCK.COM

Capital Credits Allocated

AS EACH YEAR comes to a close, CECA allocates capital credits to the accounts of members.

Cooperatives determine margins accumulated from operations and allocate those margins to members' accounts, after all expenditures are paid and based on each members' usage.

These capital credits will be returned to members in the future in the form of estate returns or general returns when doing so will not weaken the financial condition of the cooperative, as determined by CECA's board of directors.

In the meantime, the funds are invested in the cooperative plant and credited to each member's account, even if the member moves out of our service territory. That's why it's important for member families departing our service territory to inform CECA of address changes, so capital credits can be returned and not go uncollected when the board approves a distribution.

2022 Allocation Factors

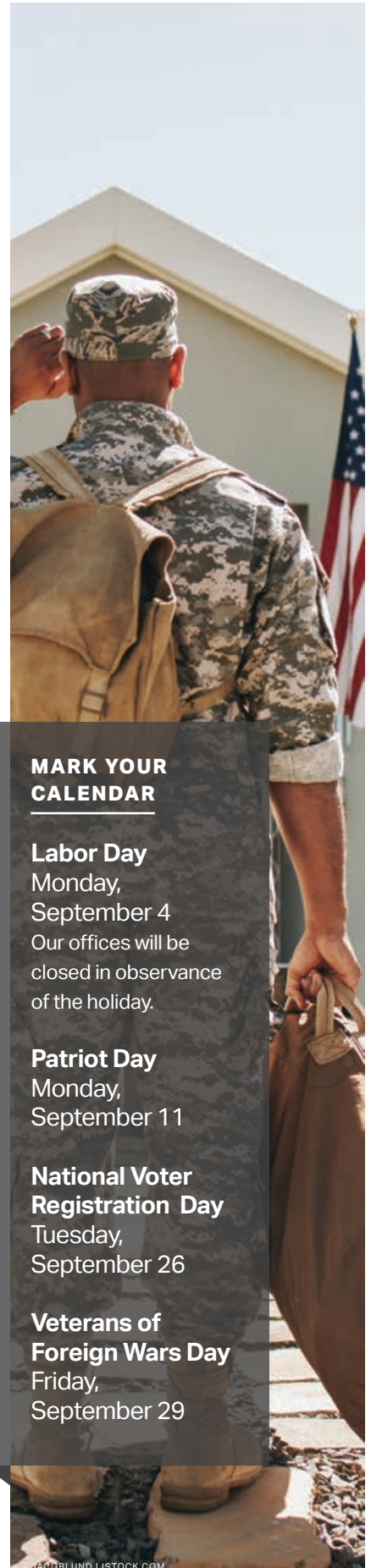
Residential: 0.00465680

General service: 0.00627562

Capital credits for 2022 were calculated by multiplying each member's bill by the allocation factors listed above. For example, if your total annual residential bill from the co-op—consisting of energy billing and power cost adjustment—was \$500, multiply that amount by 0.00465680, so the product is \$2.33.

In calculating your total bill, include any security light charge but do not include any tax, service or miscellaneous charges. If you have any questions concerning these calculations, please feel free to contact the co-op office.

This article is intended to serve as an official notice of allocation of capital credits for 2022. ■



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Labor Day

Monday,
September 4

Our offices will be closed in observance of the holiday.

Patriot Day

Monday,
September 11

National Voter Registration Day

Tuesday,
September 26

Veterans of Foreign Wars Day

Friday,
September 29

JACOB LUND | ISTOCK.COM



1. CECA representatives Samuel Schuetz, left, and Ethan Pallette in front of the U.S. Capitol on June 14.
2. Capitol Day! Texas' delegates at the U.S. Capitol.
3. Rep. Pfluger fields questions and speaks on various governmental topics.
4. Pallette poses for a photo in front of the Washington Monument.

CECA Sponsors Local Students on Youth Tour

BY TRISTON MCGEHEE

IMAGINE THE THRILL of the opportunity to travel and tour Washington, D.C., for a whole week without paying a dime.

That's precisely what Ethan Pallette, 18, and Samuel Schuetz, 16, did this summer as student representatives of CECA on the Government-in-Action Youth Tour, June 11–19.

Alongside 149 other Texas high school students sponsored by their respective electric cooperatives, the students embarked on a journey that took them to renowned national sites, including the Smithsonian museums, Arlington National Cemetery, the U.S. Capitol, the National Cathedral, Capitol Hill, and various other state and national sites. This expedition provided an invaluable opportunity for the students to deepen their understanding of American history and the significance of these iconic landmarks.

The incredible opportunity is part of a long-standing tradition that traces its roots back to 1957, when Lyndon B. Johnson, then a U.S. senator and later the 36th president of the United

States, addressed the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's annual meeting in Chicago. Johnson shared his vision that every young person should witness what the American flag stands for and represents.

Over the years, this vision has transformed into a remarkable educational opportunity, impacting the lives of more than 50,000 students nationwide.

Continuing that tradition, Pallette and Schuetz eagerly embraced their roles as student representatives on this year's Youth Tour. For them, viewing the monuments, historical sites and museums proved to be a captivating and enriching experience. This immersive adventure allowed the students to grasp the profound significance behind the flag and its enduring symbolism.

"I believe I have a better knowledge of what the flag stands for than before the trip," Schuetz said.

For Schuetz, the experience was truly rewarding, as it pro-



vided him with a chance to engage and comprehend the pivotal role each site played in shaping the foundation of the U.S.

“If you actually go to touch a monument, then you understand its value more than just reading about it in a newspaper or article,” he said.

In addition to exploring landmarks, the delegates had the privilege of meeting Rep. August Pfluger, who represents Texas’ 11th congressional district. The students were even invited by Pfluger to view a live Homeland Security committee hearing, which served as an opportunity for them to witness their government in action.

For Pallette, witnessing a congressional hearing was nothing short of inspiring. He expressed his awe at watching Pfluger perform his duties in the House of Representatives and speak to his group about various topics. Pallette recalled how impressed he was and how knowledgeable Pfluger was about electric cooperatives when speaking to his group. “When we talked to him as a group, [Pfluger] provided us with a wealth of information,” Pallette said.

Schuetz said that attending the hearing in person offered an entirely different perspective compared with seeing it on TV.

“Watching the politicians perform a committee and question the people is certainly a different experience than just watching

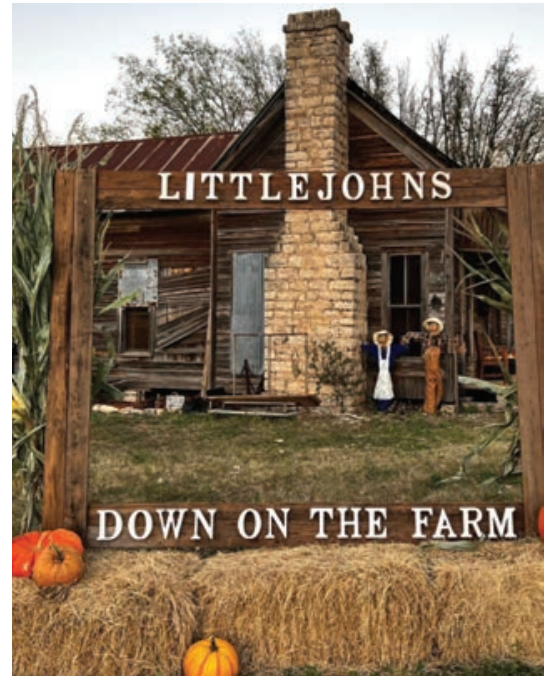
it on television,” Schuetz said. “It’s a lot more humanized, but you could still tell the beliefs, agendas and emotions behind each one of their responses.”

In addition to witnessing the inner workings of government, the delegates paid tribute to the nation’s fallen heroes with a visit to the solemn grounds of Arlington National Cemetery. “All those people who have sacrificed for this amazing country; it’s truly unbelievable,” Pallette said.

Looking back on Youth Tour, the student representatives agreed that the trip lives up to the hype.

“This trip was a trip of a lifetime,” Pallette said. “The Youth Tour says that, but I can say it too; it was a great trip to go on—I had an absolute blast.”

The students had a great time exploring and learning about their country and will treasure the friendships they made. Meeting their elected official, witnessing government in action, and visiting landmarks and historical sites are experiences that will likely stay with them for their entire lives, apt souvenirs for a once-in-a-lifetime trip. ■



Fall Festival Fun Awaits at Littlejohn's Down on the Farm

Gustine farm has something for everyone

BY BEN AND LYNSI HUSSEY

EAST OF GUSTINE, there's a farm that was purchased by Mark and Sherri Littlejohn. The Littlejohn's purchased the farm in the 1990s from descendants of the family that originally settled the land. The Littlejohn's connection to the Gustine area goes back to 1890, when Mark's forebear Augustus Adcock purchased land from the U.S. government for \$1.50 an acre. Remarkably, the original Littlejohn family land is still owned by the Littlejohn family today.

The story of the purchased farm, however, goes back even further. In the 1880s, it was settled by the Bolton family, and their home was constructed before the South Leon River flooded in 1910. During a particularly severe rainstorm that was likened to the biblical great flood, several people lost their lives. The Boltons provided a resting place for their remains found in the cornfields and along the cottonbelt railroad tracks (now Texas state Highway 36) until the waters receded.

There are numerous other stories about the South Leon River that have been handed down through generations, including memories of seeing Native Americans riding horses along the creek banks.

Mark and Sherri now work the land and pass on their skills to the seventh and eighth generations of their family: Lyndsi Hussey; her husband, Ben; and their twin boys, Cooper and Everett. In 2015, Lyndsi and Ben got married on the farm, with the bridal party preparing in the old house. In 2021, they moved their family to the other side of the farm.

Mark and Sherri have now decided to lease a part of the farm

to Lyndsi and Ben for an agricultural entertainment event called Littlejohn's Down on the Farm. The event will run from September 30 to November 5, taking place on Saturdays and Sundays.

They began the festival last year, but it was a challenging fall with hot and dry conditions, so they kept it small. The main attraction was a 10-acre corn maze.

This year, they're expanding by again including the large corn maze and adding a smaller 1 1/2-acre maze for those who prefer a shorter walk. The hayride, which proved popular, will also be extended to allow for a more scenic route. The concession stand will offer ice cream and other treats to help cool down visitors on warm afternoons.

Littlejohn's Down on the Farm will feature the corn mazes, a barrel train, gift shop, hayrides and educational information about farming and farm life. There will be games, concessions and a bounce house for younger visitors. The event welcomes back school kids and church groups who attended last year and is also a great spot for birthday parties.

A new addition this year is a live scarecrow for entertainment and photo opportunities. Visitors can take pictures in the sunflower fields and enjoy fresh country air amid the pumpkins, with the option to purchase pumpkins during their visit.

Tickets can be purchased at littlejohnstx.com or at the gate. The event is only open on Saturdays and Sundays from September 30 to November 5. The farm's address is 16995 state Highway 36 in Gustine. ■

CECA Now Offers Residential Solar Solutions

DID YOU KNOW THAT CECA now installs and sells new solar power arrays? We have trained professionals who can evaluate your electricity use and property to provide the perfect fit for your home or business based on your monthly usage patterns. So we encourage members to include CECA in their solar array installation plans from start to finish.

CECA offers various options, from backup generators and battery systems to roof-mount and ground-mount arrays. Energy efficiency has progressed with new technologies, allowing members to take a more active role in optimizing their energy consumption. We've evolved beyond the days of just turning off the lights or adjusting the thermostat when leaving the house.

If you're interested in optimizing your household's energy consumption, please call Riley Hilliard at 1-800-915-2533 to set up a free energy audit and solar power analysis. Solar power may not be a good fit for everyone, but under the right circumstances, it can save members money on their monthly bills.

There are many companies out there marketing the installation of solar panel arrays in every county CECA serves, and this has created confusion around solar buy-back plans and raised concerns about fair pricing in a new and changing industry.

We're here to help our members navigate this confusion, and if they feel solar may be a good option for them, we're able to handle the sale and installation as well.

CECA is proud to be your trusted energy partner, and if you have any interest in a solar power project for your property, that falls right in line with our aim to provide safe and reliable energy at an affordable cost to all our member-owners. For us, solar power is another avenue to continue to do just that for our members.

CECA does require that an application process be completed before interconnection with our system, to ensure proper safety, liability and metering standards are met. Regardless of the solar power vendor you choose, please contact us before you start your project to be sure that your plans are compliant and that your project goes smoothly.

You can always discuss your solar project plans with CECA staff for general information or specific needs. Solar power can be a great energy efficiency tool, and we applaud our members who are working to conserve power. Call us at 1-800-915-2533 to learn more about how we can help. ■



CECA
Energy Solutions

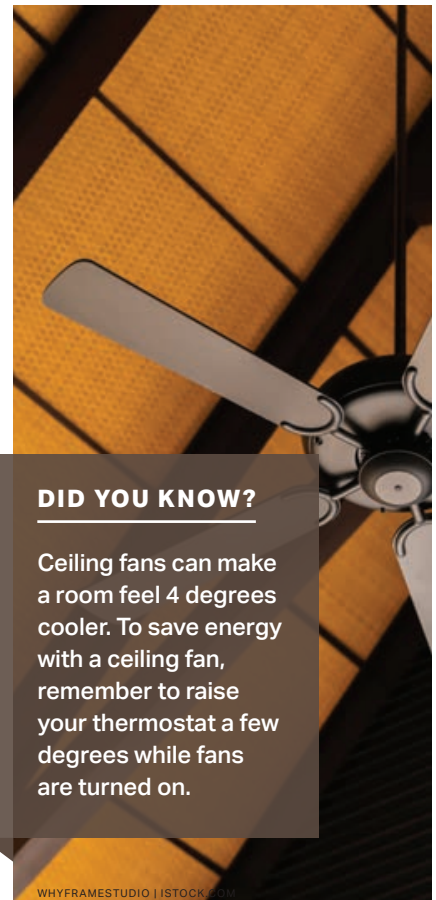
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-Riley Hilliard

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How Smart Is Your Energy Use?

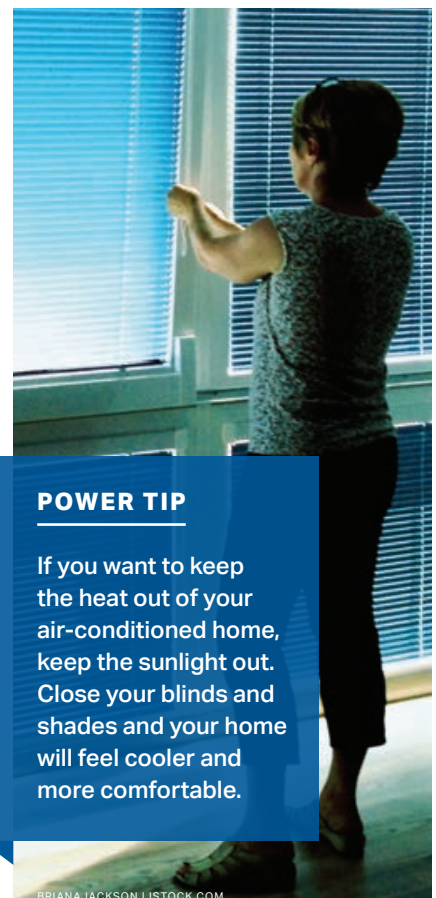
DURING AN ESPECIALLY hot summer like this one has been, your energy bills may be higher than normal as you run your air conditioning system day and night.

So look for other ways to save energy, and be smart about it by using smart technology. Sure, adding smart appliances and other tech has an upfront cost. But energy efficiency experts calculate that you could save between 5% and 30% on your energy bill if you add at least some smart solutions. Start here.

Smart plugs. A smart plug slips into your regular wall outlet and can be programmed to wirelessly turn on lights, cameras, motion sensors or alarms. You may have used these to turn the lights on and off at home while you're on vacation. Many allow you to operate them remotely. Most help save energy because they use little energy and do not use as much "phantom" power for unused devices as those devices would use if you plugged them in without the smart plug.

Smart outlets. These replace your regular wall outlets and require some wiring. Plugging an appliance into a smart outlet gives you the power to automate it, usually remotely. That means you can schedule appliances, lights and other devices to turn on and off automatically. A smart outlet saves energy much like a smart plug does, and most models also have an energy monitoring feature that will reveal how much electricity an appliance or device uses.

Programmable thermostat. You don't need your house to stay as cool while you're not in it. You can set a programmable thermostat to turn the AC up right after you leave for work every day and turn it back down just before you usually get home. Manufacturers say you can save as much as 10% a year on heating and cooling by adjusting your thermostat by 7-10 degrees for eight hours a day. ■



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Billie Jean King enters the Battle of the Sexes on a throne. She soon assumed a broader reign in the sports world.

King dominated Riggs, 55 years old and out of shape. When she won the first set, the women in the Astrodome gave her a standing ovation. In short order, she won the next two sets. After the final point, King tossed her racket into the air, and Riggs hopped the net and whispered into her ear, “I underestimated you.”

That was hardly news to King.

It took an act of Congress to start leveling the playing field for women. Title IX, signed into law in June 1972, heralded a promise of more opportunities for women in sports.

And yet, in September 1972, after King captured the U.S. Open title, she denounced her most unequal prize money in a press conference. She won \$10,000, while the men’s champion, Ilie Năstase, got \$25,000.

“This was ridiculous, so I said, ‘I don’t think the women are going to be back next year. We’re not going to be back in 1973 unless we get equal prize money,’” King recalled years later.

Her firm stand paid off. A year later, just weeks before the Battle of the Sexes at the Astrodome, the U.S. Open started paying women the same as men.

In the 50 years since shutting down—and shutting up—Riggs, King has become a leading advocate for women and LGBTQ+ people. She became the first female athlete awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, in 2009.

Through a 2023 lens, the spectacle at the Astrodome might seem more tiresome than outrageous. To King, being at the forefront of a social uprising in 1972 and 1973 was simply tiring.

“It was a huge year, a pivotal year for tennis and for women in general,” King told *USA Today* columnist Christine Brennan. “I just remember being exhausted all the time. As I’ve said before, when I sleep in now, I’m still catching up from the 1970s.” ■

When Pigs Fly

Billie Jean King did the unthinkable, crushing Bobby Riggs—and notching a win for gender equality—at the Astrodome

BY TOM WIDLowski

YOU HAVE TO PEEL back an almost insufferable layer of hype—garishness, really—to reach the essence of Billie Jean King’s victory in the so-called Battle of the Sexes 50 years ago this month in Houston. In truth, you have to peel back the calendar by 12 months—to King’s bold shot across the bow, when she decried the disparity in prize money between men and women.

First the hype. Bobby Riggs, a tennis star in the 1940s who later became a shameless promoter, declared no woman could beat him. Not even King, who by the summer of 1973 had already won 31 of her 39 career grand slam titles. King, 29, accepted the challenge, even agreeing to

play by men’s rules—best of five sets, as opposed to women’s best of three.

So on September 20, 1973, four shirtless members of the Rice University men’s track team carried King on a litter, à la Cleopatra, onto a tennis court set up inside the 8-year-old Astrodome. Riggs, a self-proclaimed chauvinist wearing a warmup jacket that said Sugar Daddy, entered in a rickshaw pulled by models.

King, as if to state the obvious, presented Riggs with a gift of a baby pig.

When the bluster subsided, the 30,472 in attendance, joined by some 90 million TV viewers worldwide—a tennis record that still stands—settled in for a sports contest. Except it was no contest.

No-Bake Desserts

Skip the oven but not the indulgence with these grand finales

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

Who says cheesecake must be complicated? This no-bake apple cheesecake is creamy and delicious and combines two favorite desserts—apple pie and cheesecake—into one outstanding treat.

Mini Apple Cheesecakes

3 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 large apples, peeled, cored and diced
¼ cup brown sugar
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
2 teaspoons cornstarch
1 package cream cheese (8 ounces), room temperature
1 can sweetened condensed milk (14 ounces)
¼ cup lemon juice
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
6 pre-made mini graham cracker pie crusts

1. Melt butter in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add the diced apples and brown sugar. Sauté until apples begin to soften. Add cinnamon and cornstarch and stir and simmer until apples are tender. Remove from heat and allow to cool completely.
2. Beat cream cheese until smooth. Add sweetened condensed milk and continue beating, scraping down sides of the bowl until well-mixed. Stir in lemon juice and vanilla.
3. Spoon cheesecake filling into graham cracker crusts. Chill in fridge until firm, about an hour, and serve topped with apple mixture.

SERVES 6

TCP Follow Vianney Rodriguez while she cooks in *Cocina Gris* at sweetlifecake.com, where she features a recipe for No-Bake Concha Truffles.





Ambrosia

DEBORAH ANDERSON
COSERV

Anderson shares her version of the classic Southern dessert, ambrosia, a tropical fruit salad that can be whipped up in 10 minutes.

- 1 container frozen whipped topping (8 ounces), thawed**
- 3 cans tropical fruit (15 ounces each), drained**
- 2 cups mini multicolored marshmallows**
- 1½ cups shredded sweetened coconut**

1. Combine all ingredients. Mix well. Chill until ready to serve.

SERVES 6

Frozen Peanut Butter Banana Pie

JAN BOX
TRINITY VALLEY EC

Frozen peanut butter banana pie is an easy-to-make dessert—no oven required. Layers of hot fudge, peanut butter, whipped topping, bananas and chocolate atop a sugar cookie crust make for the perfect ending to any meal.

- 2 cups crushed sugar cookies**
- 4 tablespoons (½ stick) butter, melted**
- 1 jar hot fudge topping (11.75 ounces), warmed**

CONTINUED >

\$500 WINNER

Chocolate Éclair Dessert

BRENDA HEINRICH
MIDSOUTH EC



All the deliciousness of an éclair with no baking. Luxurious layers of pudding, graham crackers and whipped topping finished with a chocolate glaze make for one amazing dessert.

SERVES 8-12



- 2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter, room temperature, for the pan**
- 1 box graham crackers (14.4 ounces)**
- 2 packages instant French vanilla pudding mix (3.25 ounces each)**
- 3½ cups milk, divided use**
- 1 container frozen whipped topping (8 ounces), thawed**
- 2 cups sugar**
- ⅔ cup unsweetened cocoa powder**
- 4 tablespoons (½ stick) butter**
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract**

1. Coat the bottom of a 9-by-13-inch pan with butter.
2. Line the bottom of the pan with ⅓ of the graham crackers.
3. In a large bowl, use an electric mixer to combine the pudding mix with 3 cups milk. Beat at medium speed for 2 minutes.
4. Gently fold in whipped topping. Pour half the pudding mixture over the graham crackers.
5. Layer another ⅓ of the graham crackers and the remaining pudding mixture, then top with the remaining graham crackers.
6. In a saucepan, combine sugar, cocoa and remaining ½ cup milk. Bring to a boil. Boil 1 minute.
7. Remove cocoa mixture from heat and add butter and vanilla. Mix well and allow to cool. Pour the chocolate sauce over the graham cracker layer.
8. Refrigerate overnight until set.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

CHOCOLATE DUE SEPTEMBER 10

We're looking for your choicest chocolate recipe—cake, brownie, whatever. Submit your best online by September 10 for a chance to win \$500.



RECIPES CONTINUED

- 1 package cream cheese (8 ounces), room temperature
- 1 cup peanut butter
- 1¼ cups powdered sugar
- 1 container frozen whipped topping (16 ounces), thawed, divided use
- 3 bananas, sliced ¼-inch thick
- 1 cup chocolate syrup

1. Mix together sugar cookies and butter and press into the bottom of a greased 9-inch springform pan.
2. Pour warmed fudge topping over the crust.
3. Blend cream cheese and peanut butter until smooth. Mix in powdered sugar until combined then fold in ¾ of the whipped topping.
4. Spoon mixture over fudge topping, spreading evenly.
5. Top with sliced bananas
6. Top with remaining whipped topping, spreading evenly.
7. Freeze 8 hours.



8. Allow pie to sit at room temperature 15 minutes before slicing. Run a knife around edge of pan and remove the outer ring.
9. Serve drizzled with chocolate syrup.

SERVES 12

TCP We have more than 1,000 recipes in our online archive, including desserts galore. Check out our website to find other options for delicious desserts.

Trust the Crust

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ

My favorite part of a no-bake dessert is the crust. Think beyond the OG—graham crackers. Here are five tasty options that make a perfect base for any no-bake dessert:

Shortbread: For an extra buttery base, crumble up shortbread cookies and top with whipped cream.

Chocolate chip cookies: Kids and adults will love this chocolate-studded crust.

Gingersnap cookies: Gingersnaps add a touch of spice to a sweet treat.

Pretzels: Salty and sweet pretzels make any citrus dessert sing—and zing.

Cereal: Your favorite childhood bowl of cereal transformed into a crust pleases palates of all ages.



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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Mysterious Markings

Native drawings in aptly named Paint Rock offer intriguing clues

BY CHET GARNER

I WAS EXCITED. It was a crisp spring day, and I was about to see the famous painted rocks of Paint Rock. I watched my phone GPS like a hawk as it led me to the town and then past it. “Hmm, that’s strange,” I thought but kept my eyes on the lookout for a visitors center or giant sign marking the largest collection of pictographs in North America.

“You’ve passed your destination,” taunted my GPS. What? I didn’t see a thing. I turned around and realized I missed a small gate sign marking the entrance to Campbell Ranch. This hidden gem was especially hidden.

I entered the property and met Kay Campbell, who at 96 still greets visitors and shares the story of the ancient markings on her family’s land. Campbell’s grandfather was an archaeologist and visited Texas in the 1870s in search of Native American artifacts. Near the Concho River, he found 1,500 pictographs on a rocky bluff overlooking the river valley. He purchased the land and began his research.

The drawings range in size from single figures to full shields. They depict people, animals and battles in multiple colors, but most are burnt red, created on rocks hauled in from miles away. In the 1990s observers realized that on certain days, like the summer solstice, shadows created by the rocky overhangs added additional shapes on top of the paintings. I was fascinated.

Many scientists believe this area served as an annual meeting ground for Apache, Comanche, Jumano and Tonkawa tribes. Over hundreds of years, they would meet, paint and celebrate the year. Much about their traditions is unknown, but I loved the thought of standing on perhaps the oldest family reunion grounds in Texas. ■

ABOVE Bill Campbell shows Chet around the pictographs at Paint Rock.

TCP Join Chet as he visits the tribal meeting ground in the video on our website. And see all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

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

SEPTEMBER

08

Wimberley [8–9] Wings Over Wimberley, (269) 290-5001, wingsoverwimberley.com

09

Rosenberg Ride to Rosenberg Car Show, (713) 502-3168, rosenbergartsalliance.com

10

Yorktown Holy Cross Festival, (361) 564-2893, holycrossyorktown.net

Gainesville [10–17] Gainesville Area Visual Arts Fall Art Exhibition, (940) 613-6939, gainesvilleareavisualarts.org

16

Seguin [16–17] St. James Catholic Church Classic Car Show and Festival, (830) 379-1796, saintjamescc.org

18

Kerrville [18–23] Paint Kerrville! Outdoor Painters Event, (830) 895-2911, kackkerrville.com

22

Glen Rose [22–23] Wine and Art Festival, (817) 291-8367, glenrosewineandartfestival.org

Sulphur Springs [22–23] Lone Star Heritage Quilt Guild Show, (209) 509-9522, sulphurspringstxquilts.com

23

Lakehills Medina Lake Cajun Festival, (830) 460-0600, cajunfestival-medinalake.com

Ingram [23–24] Texas Arts and Crafts Fair, (830) 367-5121, txartsandcraftsfair.com

24

Lakeway Arts in the Afternoon: Balcones Community Orchestra, (512) 261-1010, lakewayartsdistrict.com

Meyersville Sts. Peter & Paul Catholic Church Barbecue and Raffle, (361) 275-3868, catholiccommunityofcuero.org

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

29

Fairfield [29-30] Big T Memorial State Championship BBQ Cookoff, (469) 383-8355, bigtmemorial.com

Giddings [29-30] Texas Word Wrangler Book Festival, (979) 542-2716, www.giddingspubliclibrary.org

30

Winnboro Cowboy Music and Poetry Gathering, (903) 342-0686, winnboro.centerforthearts.com

OCTOBER

06

Los Fresnos [6-7] Narciso Martinez Conjunto Festival, (956) 367-0335, narciso.martinezculturalartscenter.org

Corpus Christi [6-28] Dimension L, (361) 884-6406, artcentercc.org

07

Bowie Chicken and Bread Days Heritage Festival, (940) 872-6246, cityofbowietx.com

Jonestown Night Sky Advocacy Star Party, (512) 267-2011, jtownnightsky.com

Marble Falls Main Street Car Show, (830) 220-4489, highlandlakeskiwanis.org

TCP Submit Your Event

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

Enjoy a grand TEXAS time!

F R E D E R I C K S B U R G

FOOD & WINE Fest



**Saturday, October 28
Noon-7pm**

22 Texas wineries • Texas specialty booths

Prize pull and amazing auction

Toe-tapping music • Food concessionaires

Texas craft beer • Gargantuan grape toss

Downtown Market Square

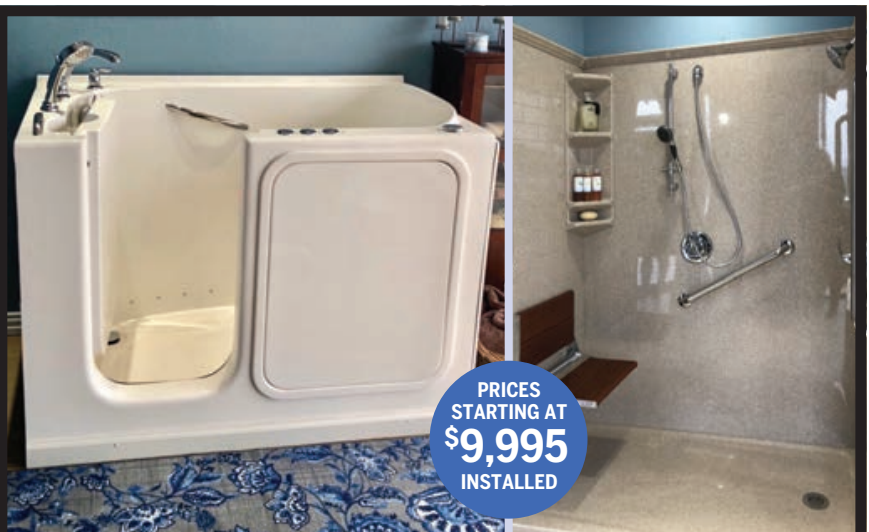
Plus three special events: Oct. 26 - Messina Hof Hill

Country; Oct. 27 - Becker Vineyards and

Oct. 28 - Marktplatz Patron Brunch

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Actual size
is 38.1 mm

New for 2023—the Morgan Silver Dollar Is BACK! **99.9% Silver, Legal Tender, Extremely Limited Availability!**

The Morgan Silver Dollar—originally minted from 1878 to 1904, then again in 1921—is the most popular vintage Silver Dollar in the world. Coin experts estimate that as few as 15% of all vintage Morgans still exist, due to the ravages of time, along with mass-meltings by the U.S. Government.

The entire market was thrilled when the U.S. Mint brought the Morgan Silver Dollar back in 2021, in honor of the popular, vintage coin's 100th anniversary.

Legal Tender, Struck in 99.9% Fine Silver

The program was a huge success, and the relatively small mintage instantly sold out at the mint. Buyers loved the fact that these new coins were the first legal-tender Morgans in 100 years, and that they were struck in 99.9% fine silver—instead of the 90% silver/10% copper alloy of the originals.

But with only 175,000 coins struck, many buyers were left empty-handed, and frustrated by the instant sell-out. If you were able to acquire a 2021 for the 100th anniversary—congratulations!

Then—An Unplanned One-Year Hiatus

Then last year, the *entire market* was left empty-handed because—although these modern Morgans were intended to be an annual release—the U.S. Mint was caught off-guard by the global shortage of the silver blanks required to strike the coins, and cancelled the 2022 release! No silver? No Morgans!

NOW for 2023—Legal-Tender Morgan Silver Dollars Are Back. But Mintages Are Low!

Now this year, 99.9% silver, legal-tender Morgan Silver Dollars are once again available to silver buyers, Morgan enthusiasts and collectors—while they last! Though somewhat larger than last year, this year's 275,000 authorized mintage is still a crazy low number—especially when you consider all the pent-up anticipation and demand caused by the quick sell-out of the 2021 Morgans, and the fact the program was cancelled last year.

Very Limited. Don't Miss Out!

Add these bright, shiny, new legal-tender 2023 Morgan Silver Dollars, struck in 99.9% Silver, to your collection now! To secure yours, call 1-888-395-3219 right now, or scan the QR code below to order online, because these—WILL NOT LAST!

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When you order now, you'll receive a BONUS, new and improved Patriots Pack, valued at \$25, FREE with your order. Plus, you'll also get FREE Shipping! Order now because these will absolutely disappear quickly!

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Night Sky

Turn your eyes to the skies and behold the heavenly wonders. They say the stars at night are big and bright in Texas. Let's space out a while and see for ourselves.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ



1 MARK BONAME
JACKSON EC

If you look closely at the Milky Way, you'll see a horse formation called the Dark Horse Nebula.

2 MIKE PRESTIGIACOMO
BARTLETT EC

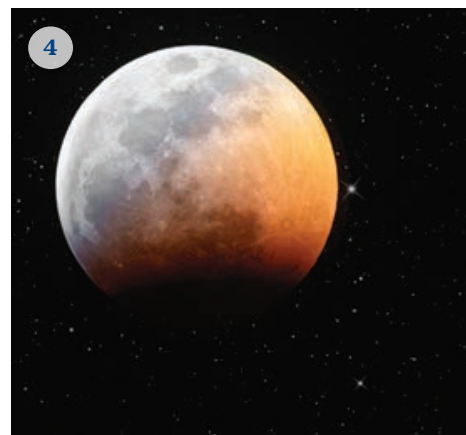
"A sudden display of colors, like fireworks on the Fourth of July, burst overhead near the Big Dipper asterism, which can still be seen."

3 JAY HOBBS
PEDERNALES EC

"A barn light is a welcoming sight for livestock in Johnson City."

4 MARK HOLLY
BANDERA EC

"It was a cold night, but I just couldn't miss photographing this rare event, the super blood wolf moon eclipse."



Upcoming Contests

- DUE SEP 10** Local Landmarks
- DUE OCT 10** Vibrant Color
- DUE NOV 10** Architecture



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for more Night Sky photos from readers.



Pam LeBlanc leaps for joy when she finds a natural body of water.

I like living my life a little out of bounds, so I count all these things as positives. They make swimming feel a little less civilized and more like a daring adventure.

For years, when I worked as a staff writer at the *Austin-American Statesman*, I crisscrossed Barton Springs Pool in Austin at noon once a week. Sometimes I'd watch cormorants dive deep into the blue-green depths, hunting for lunch. I'd see crawfish prowl the mucky bottom and thumb-sized silvery fish swirl beneath limestone ledges.

What's the appeal? No chlorine, for one. My eyes don't turn red and sting after too much time in a natural swimming hole. I don't mind getting dirty, and I like to observe the native life. In a secluded setting, I also can't resist skinny-dipping, a pastime generally frowned upon at public pools but perfectly acceptable during backpacking trips into the wilderness.

For me, wilder is better.

I've leaped into the gin-clear waters of the Devils and Pecos rivers in West Texas, swam in all seven of the Highland Lakes, and soaked in a fern-lined stretch of the Blanco River that reminds me of Shangri-La. I've swum alongside dolphins in Hawaii, whale sharks in Mexico and humpback whales in the Dominican Republic.

During a relay swim race across Lake Tahoe, I got distracted watching shafts of light flicker into the 1,644-foot depths. Once I swam, as one-half of a two-woman team, a combined 28.5 miles around Manhattan Island—up the East River, through the Harlem River and down the Hudson River. (Each one had its own distinctive flavor, as my partner says.)

I don't care if I can't see the bottom. I don't mind if a minnow nips my toes. Some days, I almost expect a mermaid to rise from the blue, and that would be OK, too. To me, swimming is like getting a full-body hug from Mother Nature. And I love hugs. ■

Wild Blue Yonder

Swimming in cement?
Give me seaweed and sand

BY PAM LEBLANC

FOUR OR FIVE mornings each week, I glide back and forth across what Jethro Bodine of the 1960s sitcom *The Beverly Hillbillies* would describe as a cement pond.

As much as I appreciate these swim practices, led by a coach who stands on deck and hollers instructions that keep me healthy and fit, I prefer a wild swim over a dip in a blue rectangle of chlorinated water any day.

Wild swims—in rivers, lakes and oceans—come with undulating aquatic plants, squishy mud and rogue waves. Sometimes they include appearances by aquatic creatures like fish and turtles or even snakes and sharks. There are no formal black stripes or lines of buoys to ensure straight swimming, and flip turns are all but impossible.

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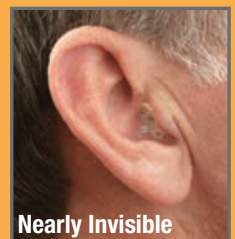
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