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FOR HOUSTON COUNTY EC MEMBERS

OCTOBER 2025

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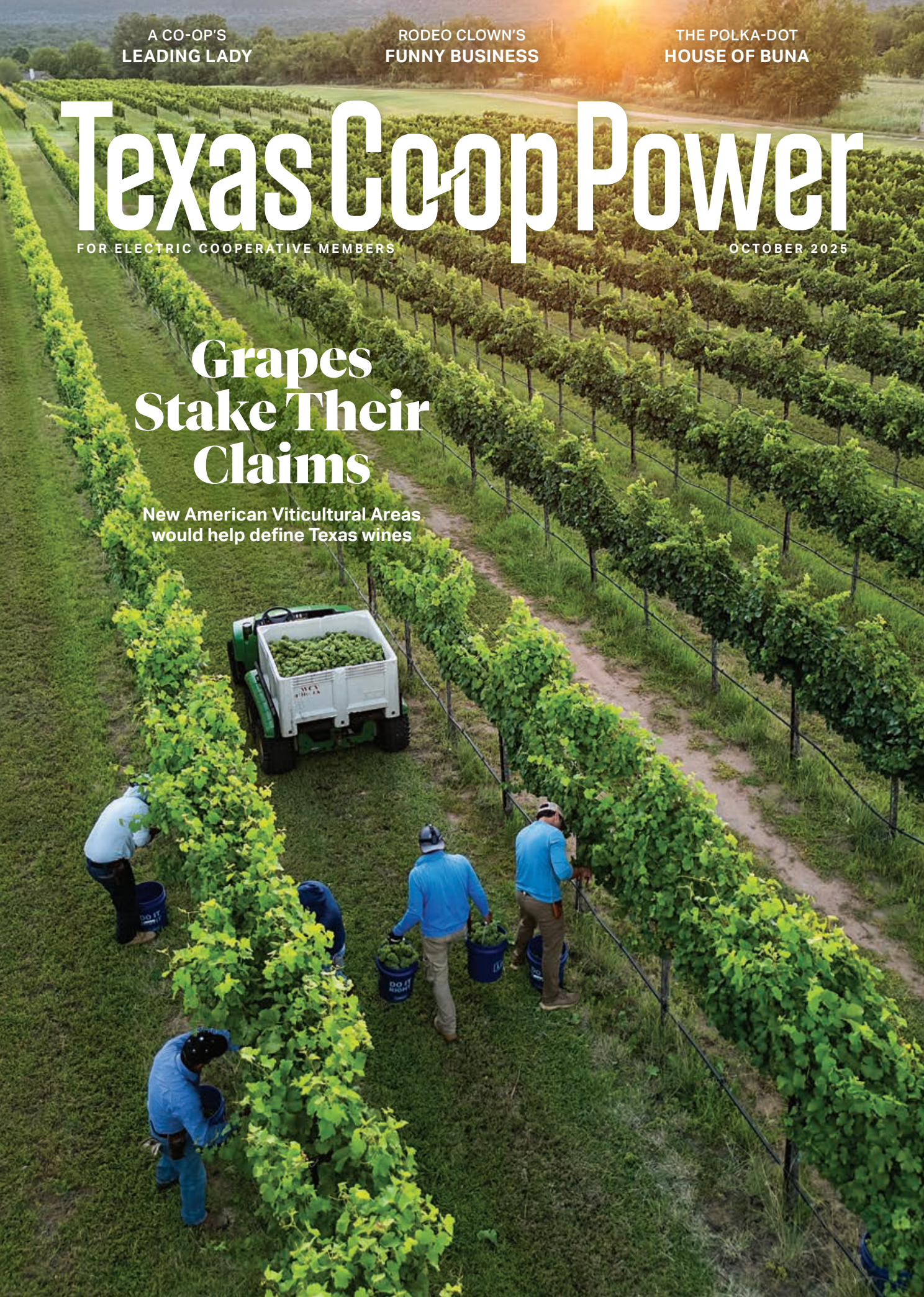
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FOR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBERS

OCTOBER 2025

Grapes Stake Their Claims

New American Viticultural Areas
would help define Texas wines



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October 2025



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06 Putting Grapes on the Map

Growers continue to refine and expand the distinctive character of Texas wines.

*By Amanda Ogle
Photos by Erich Schlegel*

Her Life of Service

Managing an electric cooperative was a job too big for one man.

By D’Ann Nichols Drennan

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ON THE COVER
Harvesting at Uplift Vineyard in July begins at dusk.
Photo by Erich Schlegel
ABOVE
For decades, Jerry Nichols was the unofficial first lady at Wood County Electric Cooperative.
Photo by Jay Patrick



Taco Timing

NATIONAL TACO DAY moved to the first Tuesday in October in 2024. Marketers liked the idea of Taco Tuesday.

Of course, in Texas, every day is taco day. Still, mark your 2025 calendars for October 7. And remember that we had the best reader recipes for tacos in March 2021—available online any day of the week.

Get Over It

Sugar Land wants to rise above all the snarling traffic around Houston.

The southwest suburb is looking at two solutions that could have commuters whizzing around overhead. Electric, self-flying taxis using vertical takeoff and landing is one possibility. Another is a system of on-demand, electric gondolas, left, that would glide on cables above city streets.

"We're told to be trailblazers and not be afraid to take risks," says Melanie Beaman, the city's transportation and mobility manager.



FINISH THIS SENTENCE

The best food I've ever had at a fair 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 August prompt: **Another day, another ...**

Texas scorcher.

BENNY CALVIT
BOWIE-CASS EC
DE KALB

Book read.

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UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES
GRANDVIEW

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ROBERTA SHOWERMAN
VIA FACEBOOK

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TCP Contests and More

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Barbecue Sides

FOCUS ON TEXAS PHOTOS

From the Oil Fields

RECOMMENDED READING

October is National Co-op Month. In October 2015 we looked at some of the terrific work co-ops do—in Texas and worldwide. Read the story at TexasCoopPower.com.

AUGUST 2025 Disc Jockeys

“Some think it’s just for college kids, slackers and stoners when, in fact, it’s a great sport for people of all ages (I’m 68).”

GREG MCCARTY
PEDERNALES EC
BUDA



WYATT MCSPADDEN

Before There Was Golf

My husband’s family is proud of the fact that his uncle, Fred Morrison, invented the Frisbee, first called the Pluto Platter [*Disc Jockeys*, August 2025]. Several family members, including my then-teenage future husband, demonstrated the invention at state fairs before it was finally bought by Wham-O.

Kathleen Warr
San Bernard EC
Hockley

Fire Prevention

I could add another tip: During holidays that normally have fireworks involved or during an extended dry spell, at each outdoor faucet I will stage a water hose with an attached nozzle [*Every Part of Texas Is at Risk*, August 2025]. If a fire starts that could affect our house, I can fight it till the fire department arrives.

Ted Pasche
CoServ
Argyle



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Learned Our Lesson

The quote from “Anonymous” was an insult to every educator in this state [*Currents*, August 2025].

The quote means, “After you’ve forgotten how to read, forgotten mathematics, forgotten EVERYTHING that you learned in school ... then you’re truly educated.”

Preposterous! As a retired educator, I can assure you that dedicated educators are teaching Texas students what they need to continue in life—in college, on-the-job training or life experiences—which they wouldn’t even be able to comprehend without those “useless things” they learned in school.

Susie McCalla
Central Texas EC
Kerrville

One Rare Sight

A little over 40 years ago, I lived in north-east Arkansas for a while, and I kept a tiny carved agate armadillo on my desk [*Dillo Dirt*, July 2025]. One day a woman in the office finally picked it up and said, “What is this?”

She had never seen one.

Mona Tucker
Rusk County EC
Carthage

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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Growers continue to refine and expand the distinctive character of Texas wines

PUTTING GRAPES ON THE MAP

BY AMANDA OGLE • PHOTOS BY ERICH SCHLEGEL

Drive across Texas and you expect to see cattle, oil pump jacks, and cotton or corn.

But grapes?

They're more Texan and more common than you might think—increasingly so. And they've been here far longer than those pump jacks.

In fact, more than 14,000 acres of grapevines provide for some 600 winemaking facilities in Texas, according to the Texas Wine and Grape Growers Association. That's way up from 3,000 acres and 200 wineries just a decade ago, a reflection of the rapidly expanding \$24 billion Texas wine industry.

Spanish missionaries brought grapevines with them to Texas in the 17th century, and attempts at winemaking with wild mustang and muscadine grapes occurred until Prohibition.

Modern winemaking picked up in the 1960s as researchers at Texas Tech University planted grapes in the High Plains of the southern Panhandle, and producers are still refining what grows best where.

The state has eight American Viticultural Areas, distinct appellations of origin used on wine labels. AVAs define grape-growing regions and identify specific geographic or climatic features that affect the characteristics of grapes.

The Texas High Plains AVA is the most productive in the state, with more than 8,000 acres of vineyards, followed by

ABOVE Claire Richardson is a winemaker at Burnet-based Uplift Vineyard near Lake Buchanan.

OPPOSITE Drew Tallent with a handful of iron-rich Hickory Sands soil at Tallent Vineyards, north of Mason.





ABOVE From left, Bob Young, Bending Branch Winery CEO; Tallent; and Jen Cernosek, Bending Branch general manager, at Tallent Vineyards.

OPPOSITE Ron Yates of Spicewood Vineyards. He sources grapes from the proposed Dell Valley American Viticultural Area in the Chihuahuan Desert of far West Texas.

the Texas Hill Country AVA with about 2,500 acres. The oldest, the Mesilla Valley AVA, established in 1985, straddles Texas and New Mexico in the El Paso area.

As the Texas wine scene continues to expand, more oenophiles are learning about what they taste in the state's specific terroirs, nailing down hyperlocal characteristics that help them understand exactly what types of wines they like from each region.

"The entire country of France has more than 360 different appellations," says Valerie Elkins, managing director of membership operations for William Chris Wine Co., based in Hye, between Fredericksburg and Johnson City. "Yet Texas is larger than France, and we only have eight defined AVAs. These AVAs help the consumer to identify regions and regional expectations, so establishing more AVAs helps get more national and international understanding."

"If you were to go to a restaurant today and order a chardonnay, you'd look for a California Russian River Valley chardonnay because that's one of the regions where those grapes grow the best. We don't really have that in Texas yet."

Grape and wine producers await the approval of three viticultural areas by the U.S. Treasury's Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau. The process for establishing an AVA is tedious and slow. If approved, these new appellations would be Texas' first since 2005.

LLANO UPLIFT AVA

Located entirely within the Texas Hill Country AVA, the Llano Uplift AVA would cover 1.3 million acres. The greater Hill Country region sits over an ancient limestone seabed, meaning the soils are more alkaline compared with the slightly acidic soils of the uplift, which is marked by a geological formation made primarily of granite rather than limestone.

According to Justin Scheiner, associate professor and viticulture specialist at Texas A&M University and the petitioner behind this AVA proposal, the Llano Uplift has its own aquifer system, which impacts nutrient availability and water quality and allows for different rootstocks to be planted. The uplift gets less rain than surrounding areas, which contributes to the distinct character of wines made from the vineyards here.

"Aromatically, the wines in the Llano Uplift AVA exhibit more floral, delicate and perfumed characteristics," says Claire Richardson, winemaker at Burnet-based Uplift Vineyard, which is within the proposed Llano Uplift AVA and a member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative.

"The wines are typically medium in body and have a distinct tannin structure that could be described as dusty or powdery," she says, noting that depending on the vintage and variety, herbal characteristics can be present in the wines, including mint, eucalyptus and subtle green pepper.

HICKORY SANDS DISTRICT AVA

This proposed viticultural area is located entirely within the western part of the proposed Llano Uplift AVA and on the edge of the Edwards Plateau in Mason County. Soils here are rich in iron, with granite and sandstone. Water from the Hickory Aquifer is important for irrigation.

Bending Branch Winery, based in Comfort and a member of Bandera Electric Cooperative, sources Hickory Sands grapes from Drew Tallent of Tallent Vineyards, one of the catalysts behind the application for this AVA proposal.

“Vines are able to root deeply into the soils of the Hickory Sands,” says Jennifer Cernosek, general manager of Bending Branch. “The Hickory Sands aquifer gives great water content to the soil, and the well-drained soil contributes to the fruit-forward nature of the wines from these grapes.”

Cernosek says that the wines Bending Branch makes from Tallent’s grapes tend to be softer in tannins, have a deeper mineral profile and are earthier.

“There’s a vanilla note in the wines that comes through across various grape varieties,” she says.

DELL VALLEY AVA

In the Chihuahuan Desert of far West Texas, the proposed Dell Valley AVA is in Hudspeth County, west of the Guadalupe Mountains and east of El Paso.

The higher elevation here, 3,640–4,200 feet, provides diurnal shifts, which means it’s hot during the day and cold in the mornings, so that grapes can produce sugars in the heat and acids as they cool.

Ron Yates of Spicewood Vineyards, a member of Pedernales EC, sources grapes from Dell Valley. He says the distinctive altitude, soil and farming techniques come through in the grapes.

“For me, it’s probably the best-value fruit we have in the



state,” he says. “Not a lot of folks are getting it, and it makes great wine. That mountain air up there is almost no humidity, so disease pressure for the grapes is less. Plus, deer aren’t roaming and eating your grapes.

“It’s probably one of the only places in the state that I have found where we can make lower-alcohol wine, and it’s still really jumping out with flavors and fruit.”

ABOUT TIME

Establishing a new AVA involves filing a petition that takes time to be “perfected” to meet TTB regulation requirements, a period for public comment and then rulemaking finalization. It can take years.

But the Llano Uplift AVA, filed with the government in 2022, is close to becoming official; it’s third in line to enter a public comment period, followed by Hickory Sands, filed in 2023, which is 10th in line.

However, while the AVAs aren’t yet official, you can still enjoy wines from each of these areas at wineries and vineyards across Texas and beyond.

“Texas is becoming known as a world-class wine region,” says Elkins of William Chris Wine. “Breaking down our grow regions to show the unique characteristics of the soil and growing conditions will help raise awareness for the variety of terroir Texas has and continue to make Texas-grown wine more prominent in the national and international wine world.” ■



Worth the Squeeze

Grapes to sample from each of the proposed AVAs

LLANO UPLIFT

Montepulciano and sangiovese, both used in Italian red wines

HICKORY SANDS

Red grapes merlot, mourvèdre, touriga nacional, tannat and tempranillo, and white grape viognier

DELL VALLEY

Cabernet franc, cabernet sauvignon, chenin blanc, petit verdot, tempranillo, muscat, riesling, chardonnay and sémillon



Managing an
electric cooperative
was a job too big
for one man

Her Life *of* Service

BY D'ANN NICHOLS DRENNAN
PHOTO BY JAY PATRICK

When Jerry Jordan said “I do” to Juan D. Nichols in 1951, she didn’t realize all she was saying yes to.

Jerry, born in 1933, was 3 or 4 when electricity came to her family’s farm near Newsome in East Texas.

“My grandparents’ and my parents’ houses were on the highway, so we were fortunate,” she says. “We were one of the first to get power.” While she doesn’t remember her own home before electric lights, she recalls visiting family and friends who didn’t have such luxuries. “It made me feel very lucky.”

She never dreamed she’d devote herself to the electric industry. She says that her first husband was a sailor in Korea, her second a college student, her third a fertilizer salesman and her fourth the general manager of Wood County Electric Cooperative. With a twinkle in her clear, green eyes, the 92-year-old whispers conspiratorially, “They were all the same man.”

In 1961, Jerry was happily settled with Juan and their three small children in Woodway, just outside of Waco.

“But Juan D. didn’t want to live anywhere other than Wood County,” where he grew up, she says. A family friend who served on the board of directors at Wood County EC told Juan about a new position opening up at the East Texas co-op: power use adviser.

Juan met Virgil Shaw, the co-op’s founding general manager, at his farm just east of Quitman on a Saturday in late fall. Jerry remembers that Juan rushed back to where she and the children were visiting with her in-laws and said, “Jerry, come on, he wants to meet you too.”

Jerry purses her lips. “Juan D. told me I didn’t have time to change, so I hopped in the car and off we went.” She must have made a good impression because Shaw hired Juan that day.

Jerry Nichols, at her Quitman home, holds a portrait from her wedding to Juan D.



"It wasn't unusual," Jerry explains, "for an employer to expect the wife to help the man—without compensation, of course."

She knits her still-dark brows. "Back then, I signed everything as Mrs. J.D. Nichols, never my name. When my daddy died, the clerk sent me out of the room so Juan D. could sign the papers to inherit my property. I couldn't get a credit card, couldn't take out a bank loan without my husband's signature." Jerry smirks. "Even though I managed our money better than he did!"

When Juan and Jerry moved to Quitman, about 35 miles north of Tyler, there were no houses available to purchase. They rented a little green house in town. Jerry remembers it snowed that winter, and flakes drifted in around the closed window and piled up on the dining table next to it.

They soon bought a lot on Meadowbrook Lane and built a modest ranch-style home. It was the first all-electric residence in Quitman. Juan installed extra meters to measure how much electricity it took to run the range, water heater, and central heating and air. Jerry didn't get along with the electric stove. "Not to start with!" she exclaims. "I hated that

electric stove. Boy, when it boiled over, it made a mess!"

Not long after they moved in, there was a gas outage in town, and a gas company employee showed up at the door. Jerry told him, "I don't have any gas."

"Everybody has gas," he answered. "For your stove, your heating and your hot water."

Jerry's voice is still smug as she repeats what she told him: "Not in my house."

A college graduate with an English degree, Jerry didn't want to leave behind her young children to teach school. At that time, public school began in first grade. So Jerry started the first kindergarten in Quitman in the garage of their new home. She operated Kiddie Kollege until 1970, when she and Juan were expecting their fourth and last child.

On January 1, 1968, Juan was promoted, becoming the second general manager of Wood County EC. At age 37, he was one of the youngest managers in the state.

Not long after Juan began working for the co-op, Jerry noticed that several wives of members of the board of directors would drive their husbands to the monthly meetings and wait in their cars outside. With a laugh, she explains that the men were "too old to drive—they were in their 60s and 70s!"

Jerry invited these ladies to her home. For more than three decades, she served coffee and dessert and visited

National Cooperative Month

October is when the more than 30,000 co-ops in the U.S. celebrate their unique business model and the cohesive communities they create and support. Included in that number are 894 electric distribution and generation and transmission cooperatives with some 42 million members. That includes 77 co-ops that power the lives of some 3 million Texans with 363,000 miles of line across the state.



OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Jerry at the Nichols' house on Meadowbrook Lane, the first all-electric residence in Quitman. A moment from Juan D.'s roast when he retired from Wood County Electric Cooperative. The family gathered to celebrate Jerry and Juan D.'s 70th wedding anniversary.

ABOVE The Nicholsons in 1973.

RIGHT Jerry when she served as president of the Sabine River Authority of Texas.



PHOTOS THIS SPREAD: COURTESY JERRY NICHOLS

with the wives one Monday a month while their husbands conducted business.

"It was a consuming job for both of us," Jerry says. In those days, when an ice storm hit, Juan went to the office until the lines were cleared. Jerry cooked huge pots of chili or stew so the lineworkers could have a hot meal when they came in.

The co-op didn't have 24-hour dispatching until 1981. Before that, people called the Nichols' home phone whenever their power went out. Jerry recalls one night when the harsh ring woke Juan from a deep sleep. She heard him ask three times for the caller's last name, then finally inquire, "How do you spell that?" Jerry laughs as she remembers hearing Juan repeat back, "J-O-N-E-S."

In the '80s, the co-op hired lawyers from Washington, D.C., and consultants from Georgia to help with wholesale power purchases and other national issues affecting rural cooperatives. "There weren't many options for hotels near us in those days, so I always hosted whoever was in town at our home," Jerry remembers. "At first, I was intimidated, but I discovered these men were grateful to have a home-

cooked meal and spend time with our family."

Even though Jerry was a supportive wife, she wasn't content merely to serve stews and sip coffee. She took a leadership role in her community and in statewide organizations.

Jerry was active in the Quitman PTA, donating her time to the schools her children attended, and she was the editor of the Texas Rural Electric Women's Association newsletter.

Her proudest accomplishment came in October 1991, when Gov. Ann Richards appointed Jerry as the first female director of the Sabine River Authority of Texas. Initially, a staffer was assigned to be Jerry's "chaperone" at every board function. After the second encounter, Jerry decided, "Enough is enough."

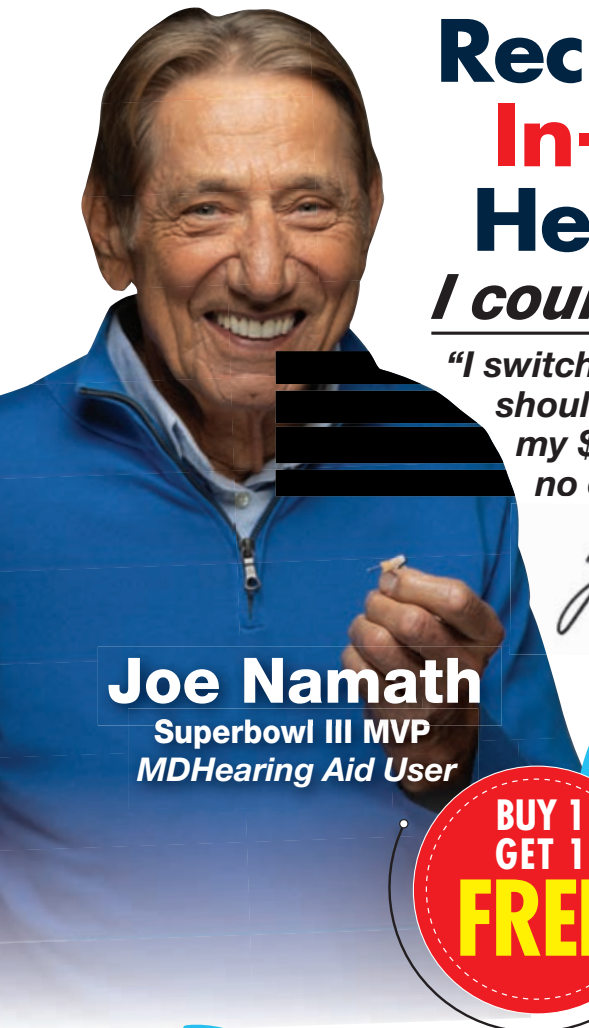
At the next meeting, she walked up to the huddle of male directors.

"They didn't have anything to say that would shock me," she exclaims, tapping a red-polished nail on the arm of her chair. "I shared these experiences with Juan D. Hopefully, I helped make it easier for women to become leaders in our co-op."

Jerry encouraged Juan to recruit women for executive positions and the board. In 1991, Cathy Roberts was chosen to fill an unexpired term, becoming the first female board member of Wood County EC. When Juan retired in 1997, he recommended Debbie Robinson to succeed him as general manager. She was one of the first women in the nation to lead an electric cooperative.

Juan died the day after Christmas in 2021, but Jerry continues to live in the house they shared. She has four children, eight grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren, who she says are the center of her world.

Jerry rocks gently in her recliner, a smile lighting her face. "I don't know how I got so blessed," she says. "Juan D.'s and my work with the co-op provided us with opportunities I never could have imagined." ■



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Powering Communities With Service

COMMUNITIES COME IN all shapes and sizes. Some are based on geographical proximity, some are based on shared interests or hobbies, and some can even be found in virtual spaces like social media groups. Regardless of where they are or how they're formed, communities bring people together and create a sense of belonging.

Houston County Electric Cooperative is committed to our members, and we're connected to you through service. It makes us proud to lend a hand to hang community Christmas decorations, support our local schools or assist a stranded motorist on the side of the road.

We have a personal connection to the community. Many of our employees grew up right here in our

How often do you have that opportunity with other service providers? We are your friends and neighbors, uniquely suited to meet our members' needs.

We are flexible and responsive. You have local control through your elected board members. We can respond to everything from storms to changing demands in the energy market quickly and efficiently. Without layers of bureaucracy, we strive to always provide great service, meet our commitments and respond to your concerns.

We focus on your cost. As a not-for-profit electric cooperative, there is no rate of return for corporate shareholders. All margin is returned to you, our member-owners. We operate lean and work to provide safe, reliable and affordable power.

Most importantly, we care about you and your quality of life. Over the years, I've had the privilege of meeting many of you, but there is one member that really stands out, Mr. Andy McGuire of Buffalo. Mr. Andy lets us know when we do a good job and when his lights are out too long. He knows his servicemen, sings the praises of the cooperative and remembers when his father first got electricity. We helped coordinate with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to assist him when his roof blew off in one of our East Texas storms. He was quick to note that even though his roof blew off, his power never went out (that time).

Mr. Andy helped us in our legislative battles to protect cooperative and rural interests. Mr. McGuire truly is a member-owner. He is proud of his ownership in Houston County EC. It is our membership that makes a difference. It is all the unique individuals who make up our membership and the personal relationships we develop in serving you that make Houston County EC great.

This October we are celebrating our 86th annual membership meeting. Join us as we celebrate the power of community and service on Tuesday, October 28, at our annual fish fry.

Our mission is reliable power. Our purpose is people—the local communities we're proud to serve. ■



service territory, and you have known them for years. Some of us, like myself, are transplants to East Texas and have the good fortune of being your neighbor now.

We speak of the cooperative difference generically, but that difference of service and connection is hard to define. There are many utilities that provide electricity. There are millions of consumers who expect power to come on with a flip of a switch. So what makes cooperatives and Houston County EC different?

We are here to serve. Our employees and directors are equally invested in our local community—because we live here too. When you call us, you are speaking with real people just a few miles away from you. If you need to speak with us in-person, you can.

Mark your calendars

OCTOBER

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
28	29	30	01	02	03	04
05	06	07	08	09	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	01
02	03	04	05	06	07	08

Tuesday, October 28

DOORS OPEN - 4 PM

REGISTRATION - 4 - 5:45 PM

INFO BOOTHS, FOOD, ENTERTAINMENT - 4 - 5:45 PM

BUSINESS MEETING - 6 PM



Houston County Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

CONTACT US

P.O. Box 52
Crockett, TX 75835
Local (936) 544-5641
Toll-Free 1-800-657-2445
Web houstoncountyelec.com

General Manager

Kathi Calvert

Board of Directors

Dan Courmier, President
Kennon Kellum, Vice President
Mitchell Huff, Secretary-Treasurer
Mary L. Pearl Adams
William Emmons
Larry Nelms
Charles "Chuck" Siems
Grady Wakefield
David Whittlesey

24/7

Outage Hotline Number

For information and
to report outages,
please call us.

TOLL-FREE
1-800-970-4232

ABOUT HOUSTON COUNTY EC

HCEC owns and maintains more than 5,100 miles of line to provide electric service to more than 15,000 members in Anderson, Angelina, Cherokee, Freestone, Houston, Leon, Madison, Trinity and Walker counties.

BUSINESS HOURS

Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

BOARD MEETING

Fourth Thursday, 4 p.m.*

*Subject to change. To verify, please call.

MEMBER SERVICE

For general information during business hours:
(936) 544-5641 local, 1-800-657-2445 toll-free

- To report an outage, press 1.
- To update your contact information, press 2.
- To speak to a member services representative regarding your account, press 4.
- Para hablar con un representante de habla español, presione 5.
- To connect, disconnect or transfer service, press 6.
- To report outdoor lighting issues or other nonemergencies regarding your electric service, press 7.

VISIT US ONLINE

houstoncountyelec.com



Check us out at
TexasCoopPower.com/houston

Powering COMMUNITIES THROUGH SERVICE



Our members are the heart of our cooperative, and every employee is dedicated to making each interaction exceptional. We all have stories to share—moments that brightened our day or made a positive impact. While we may not always be perfect, we consistently strive to provide you power that supports your way of life.



“When you go above and beyond for others, you do it out of kindness, not for a story. There have been several occasions, particularly during storms, when I’ve helped neighbors clear their driveways so they could access their homes. I’ve also given rides to people who have run out of gas. I do these things because it’s the right thing to do; it’s how I was raised, not for recognition.”

-Riley Barrett, Serviceman

“Oh goodness! In the eighteen years I’ve worked here, I know I’ve helped my neighbors by stopping at the Kennard school and bringing their light bills to town. I’ve also taken paperwork and dropped it off for them—anything to help them save a trip into town!”

-Cherry Kellum, Accounts Payable



“I remember a time when I was a dispatcher that Circuit Three out of Latexo [substation] went out, and an elderly member called that they were stuck in their power recliner and couldn’t get out. I noticed on the map that a truck was near their home, so I got that lineman to go and, with the member’s permission, assist them out of their chair. Their lights weren’t restored right then, but they couldn’t thank me enough for not leaving them stranded!”

-Leanne Westbrook, Member Service Representative

“Working in dispatch, we often don’t receive the friendliest calls. People typically reach out to us when they are without electricity and are understandably upset. I remember a large outage that affected about 8,000 meters. During this event, a member called to ask when her electricity would be restored. The outage had actually been resolved for quite some time, but her generator had not turned off.

As we talked, I guided her through the process of turning off the generator, which was humming loudly in our ears. She was incredibly grateful for the assistance. After we addressed the generator issue, she confided in me that her husband had always managed these matters, but since he had passed away, she didn’t know what to do.

I advised her to contact her generator installer for servicing. Despite the hectic atmosphere of the dispatch office and crews radioing in about various outages, I couldn’t shake the thought: “What if this were my grandma? I’d want someone to take the time to help her.” Even though things were busy, I felt a strong urge to support her in any way I could.”

-Jessica Bennett, Dispatcher



Brandon Quillin, Construction Crew Foreman, went to rescue a kitten that had been stuck in a tree for quite some time. We received a call from a desperate member who had tried everything to help the kitten. Although this was not part of our usual working conditions, we were glad to use our equipment to assist in the rescue!



From time to time, we are asked to participate in events that may not align directly with our core mission of restoring power, but they do support our commitment to serving our communities. We were excited to display the American flag at Grapeland ISD's homecoming event. We take great pride in providing services to our communities, ranging from power restoration to assisting with important events.

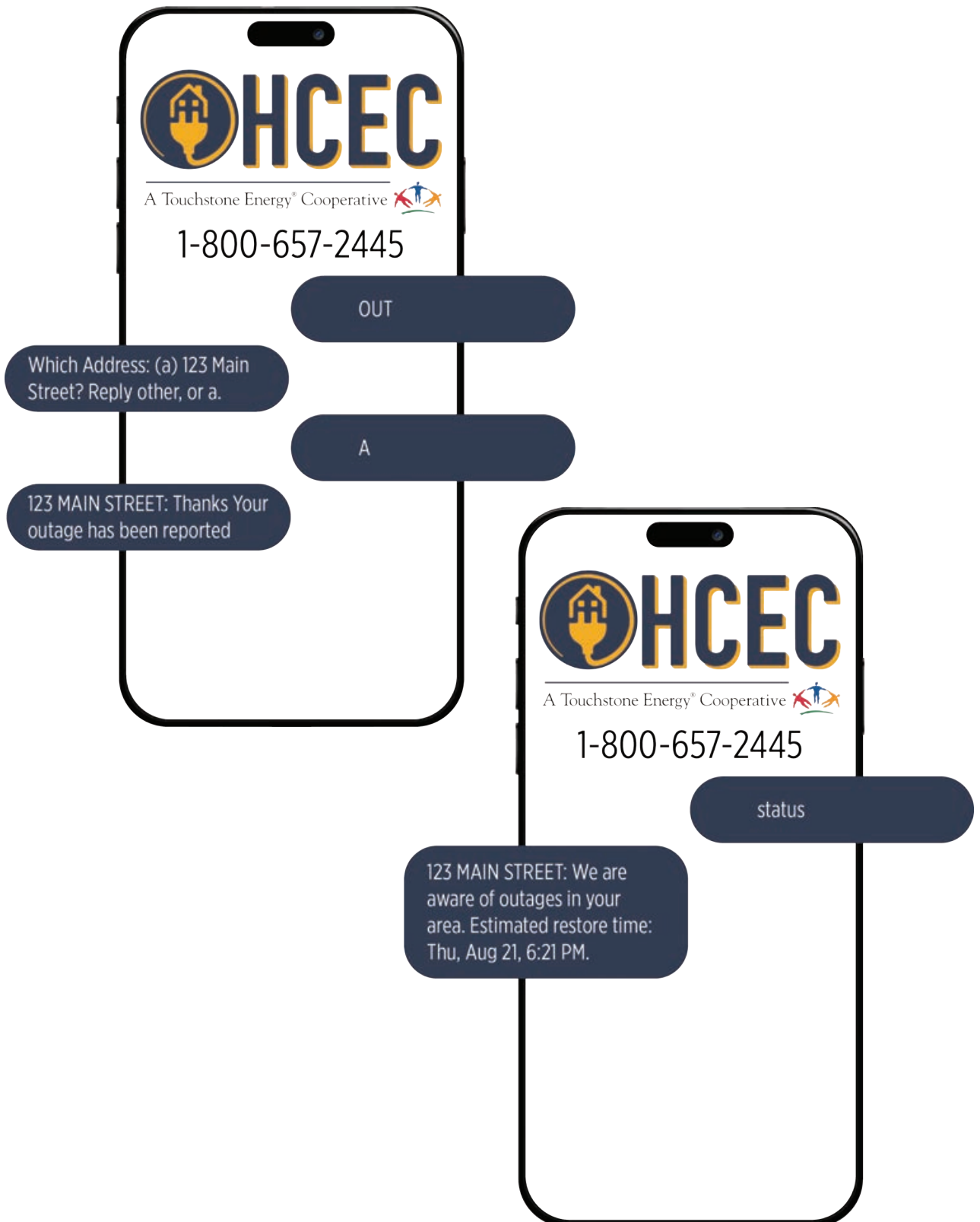
In addition to rescuing kittens and displaying flags, our crews have helped hang wreaths in downtown Crockett in preparation for the holiday season. Candace Brown, a member of HCEC, along with other business owners in downtown Crockett, requested our assistance with beautifying the area for Christmas. Our crews are committed to making our community brighter.



When Frontier Camp asked us to assist in setting up their ropes course, we gladly agreed. We provided used poles and set them in the ground for use during their summer camps! After all, Frontier Camp has helped us by housing linemen, assisting our restoration efforts after storms.

You asked, We listened.

NOW AVAILABLE: SKIP THE CALL - **TEXT US YOUR OUTAGE**
& GET STATUS UPDATES INSTANTLY.



HCEC HEADQUARTERS COLORING CONTEST

A COLORING CONTEST FOR KIDS TO HAVE THEIR ARTWORK FEATURED IN THE NEW HOUSTON COUNTY EC HEADQUARTERS.

CONTEST OVERVIEW:

Children whose parents or guardians are members of Houston County EC are encouraged to participate in Houston County EC's Coloring Contest. Winners will be featured in the new Houston County EC Headquarters lobby.

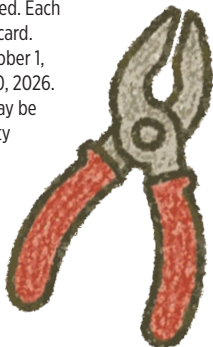
ENTRY CATEGORIES:

1. Freestyle: Use the freestyle format to design your own label. Artwork must not contain any copyright material. (AGE 8 -11)
2. Lineman Working: Use the predesigned lineman drawing to creatively color. Download full copy at houstoncountyelec.com/coloring-contest, or pick one up at the Houston County EC headquarters. (AGE 7 & UNDER)

Children may only enter one category. There will be multiple winners selected. Each winner will win a \$50 gift card. The contest begins on October 1, 2025, and ends January 30, 2026. Contest rules and dates may be changed at Houston County EC's discretion.

ELIGIBILITY:

Children whose parents or guardians are members of Houston County EC and are 4 to 11 years of age by January 31, 2026, are eligible.



CONTEST RULES:

Artwork must be submitted no later than 5 p.m. Friday, January 30, 2026 or post-marked by Friday, January 30, 2026. Freestyle submission must be original work created by applicants. Only one submission per child. Artwork must include the submission form. All submitted artwork is owned by Houston County EC and may be shared throughout Houston County EC's communication channels. Winners and their parents or guardians agree to the use of the winner's name, age, school and/or city.

DESIGN RULES:

- Artwork must be flat (two-dimensional) and may use crayon, markers, paint, pencil, ink, and/or pastels. Freestyle drawings must be on a white letter (8.5" X 11") sheet of copy paper.
- Designs must not include copy-righted material, including but not limited to company logos, product brands, store names, characters, etc.
 - Designs must not be folded or damaged.
 - Do not include the artist's name on the front of the artwork.

SUBMISSIONS:

Artwork must be submitted using template in Texas Co-op Power or houstoncountyelec.com/coloring-contest.

JUDGING:

Entries will be judged by Houston County

EC staff based on creativity, uniqueness, overall visual appeal, composition and age appropriateness. Judging will be done without knowledge or artist's name.

PRIZES:

Winners will be chosen for each category. Each winner will receive a \$50 gift card. Winners will be announced in February and their work will be featured in the future Houston County EC

Headquarter's lobby, as well as featured throughout Houston County EC's communication channels.

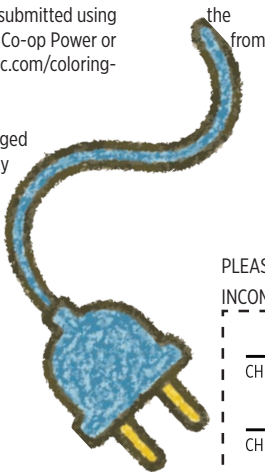
SUBMISSION:

Include the submission form with entry, or the entry will be disqualified. Entries can be dropped off Monday - Friday, 8 AM - 5 PM at the Houston County EC Headquarters, or mail your entry to:

Houston County EC
ATTN Coloring Contest
PO Box 52
Crockett, TX 75835

****Do not bend your entry!****

or upload your artwork digitally at houstoncountyelec.com/coloring-contest or email hcec@houstoncountyelec.com and put Coloring Contest in the subject line. If submitting digitally, please include the information below in the email body. Please do not use your phone to take a picture of your entry to submit. If you want to submit digitally, please use a high-quality scanner to send a copy of the entry.



LINEMAN WORKING COLORING PAGE

Please download the design at houstoncountyelec.com/coloring-contest or pick-up at the Houston County EC office!



PLEASE CUT OUT AND SUBMIT WITH ARTWORK. SUBMISSION IS INCOMPLETE, IF NOT RECEIVED.

CHILD'S FIRST & LAST NAME

CHILD'S AGE & BIRTHDAY

CHILD'S SCHOOL & GRADE

PARENT OR GUARDIAN'S NAME

HCEC ACCOUNT NUMBER

EMAIL ADDRESS

PHONE NUMBER

Plan for the Wurst

Five days of work, hundreds of volunteers, thousands of pounds of sausage, one tasty good cause

BY PAM LEBLANC • PHOTOS BY JULIA ROBINSON

HALF A DOZEN APRON-CLAD men gather around a 40-foot smoke pit behind Zion Lutheran Church in Walburg, checking on the homemade sausage sizzling on its metal racks.

At a long table nearby, more volunteers slice links and load them into tubs to be carried inside and arranged in plastic containers. In front of the church, vehicles line up at a makeshift drive-thru, their drivers buying the sausage, sweet potatoes, sauerkraut and green beans for \$15 a plate.

On the first Monday of November for more than half a century, this tiny unincorporated community about 40 miles north of Austin has come together for the Wurstbraten sausage supper.

The event began in 1971 to raise money for new carpeting in the church. The congregation's women's group came up with the idea of a sausage supper to honor the community's German heritage.

"We butchered a hog, and back then farmers still had smokehouses," says Ethel Mickan, who turns 90 this month. She served on the first organizing committee and has participated in every Wurstbraten since.

Four hundred people showed up that first year, paying just \$2.25 for adults and \$1.75 for children. The event raised enough to recarpet the church and then some.

That first year, a transformer blew out, and church members had to call the electric company. "Everybody stayed, and we kept on with the meal," Mickan says. Another year, torrential rains forced organizers to move the parking area down the road, where it wasn't so muddy.

Depending on whom you ask, organizers settled on the first Monday in November either because they wanted to do it in cooler weather, before deer season, or because Monday night wouldn't interfere with business at restaurants in the area.

"In those days there were only two or three restaurants in Georgetown, and they didn't like it when churches had events on Fridays, Saturdays or Sundays because that took away from business," Mickan says.

Over the years, Wurstbraten has grown into the quintessential community gathering. Most of the proceeds are used to fund church projects, but about 10% is donated to food banks and other nonprofit

organizations in nearby rural areas.

"The sausage is wonderful, and the meal is absolutely fabulous, but the biggest blessing of all is to see your friends," says Dan Cowan, who since 2021 has served as the *braška*, a Wendish word meaning leader of the feast.

Mickan agrees.

"I think the main thing is that we bring people together that don't get to see each other but once in a blue moon," she says.

At last year's 52nd annual Wurstbraten (the 2020 event was canceled due to the pandemic), volunteers prepared 10,500 pounds of sausage—some of it to sell by the pound, plus enough to make about 3,000 meals for pickup.

"It takes us five days and more than 300 people to pull this off, and it's all volunteer," Cowan says.

Several days before the event, organizers buy thousands of pounds of pork and beef, plus 100 pounds of black pepper, and 300 pounds of salt. They start making the sausage early Saturday, then smoke it overnight. Sunday, they prepare side dishes and sell some of the uncooked links by the pound.

"It's a pretty mild sausage," Cowan says. "I think part of the secret is that we smoke it for about 12 hours. It's stuff your grandmother would be proud of."

By 4 p.m. Monday of the 2024 event, two lines of vehicles inch their way toward the pickup area as constables direct traffic. By 5 p.m. cars stretch for a mile, and the wait is more than 30 minutes. Volunteers dash back and forth, taking orders and delivering containers of food through open vehicle windows.

"I put some in the freezer and use it for the whole year," says Nina Frias of Jarrell, who has come with her mother to pick up food. "It's hometown, it's sausage—and oh, it's magnificent."

As Frias motors away, more cars approach. Organizers say their goal is to run out of food, but that never quite happens. There's always just enough sausage to feed everyone who wants some.

"It's kind of like a miracle," Cowan says. ■

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Dan Cowan as cars line up for Wurstbraten in 2024. Sabrina Jansak-Noble and son Elias Jansak-Noble weigh bulk sausage. Kyle Kokel, left, and Rick Zinsmeyer work the pit.



Spirituality Meets Artistry

"I never expected it to be so beautiful that it takes your breath away."

— Kaya C., on Stauer Opals



In a quaint village, nestled between rolling hills, lived a young woman with a deep appreciation for gemstones. Her grandmother gifted her a delicate cross pendant adorned with opals. The opals shimmered with a mesmerizing play of colors, reflecting hues of blues, greens, and fiery oranges. Her grandmother shared the legend of the opals, believed to bring hope, purity, and luck to those who wore them.

Using this story as inspiration, Stauer brings you the **Opal Spirit Cross Pendant**. With over 2 total carats of Kyocera lab-created opals set in .925 sterling silver encased in yellow gold, this pendant is a radiant celebration of beauty and craftsmanship. Each opal captivates with a kaleidoscopic dance of fiery oranges blending into oceanic blues, streaked with flashes of vibrant green that seem to come alive with every movement. The shimmering opals are skillfully arranged to create an enchanting, otherworldly glow, embodying the spirit of hope and harmony.

This breathtaking combination of color and craftsmanship is available as a limited availability of

only 930 pieces, making it a rare and treasured addition to your jewelry collection. Plus, when you order today, you'll receive the gold-finished sterling silver chain—a \$69 value—absolutely free!

Don't miss your chance to own this exclusive tribute to timeless elegance and meaningful symbolism.

Necklace Specifications:

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Funny Business

Rodeo clown Red Sublett traveled the world wrangling laughs

BY CHUCK LYONS

IT WAS CLAIMED, journalist Jerry Armstrong once wrote, that rodeo clown Red Sublett would ride anything that “a saddle, a riggin’ or a rope could be used on”—horses, mules and bulls, of course, but also cows, buffaloes, zebras and at least one ostrich. Sometimes he rode them straight, sometimes backwards but always with zany antics that left the crowd laughing.

Sublett was “the greatest and the highest-paid arena comic of his day,” Armstrong wrote.

He was born John Dixon Sublett in Arlington in November 1893, and he died, by then known to everyone as Red, in Dallas a scant 56 years later.

His family had settled in the countryside when the prairies were still unfenced.

The town of Sublett, now part of Arlington and some 18 miles southeast of Sublett’s modest, pink granite headstone in Mount Olivet Cemetery, bears the family name.

Sublett’s father moved his family from Texas to Oklahoma via horse-drawn covered wagon with two milk cows tied to the tailgate.

Before World War I intervened in 1917, Sublett worked rough stock on ranches, including the 101 Ranch in Oklahoma and later the Four Sixes in Texas. Before that, at just 16, he had ridden broncs and steers for Booger Red’s traveling cowboy show and Lucille Mulhall’s show.

He enlisted in the war effort and saw action in France with the medical corps before returning to his rodeo antics.

At a rodeo in Magdalena, New Mexico,

the story goes, producer Tex Austin and announcer Foghorn Clancy took Sublett aside and told him he was getting plenty of big laughs just being himself and that he should become a rodeo clown.

It paid better, they said.

As rodeo evolved from its beginning in ranch corrals in the early 1900s, promoters realized their audiences drifted away whenever there was a break in the action due to injuries and other delays. So the rodeo clown was created to keep spectators entertained during those breaks.

When bull riding became a regular part of rodeos in the 1920s and ’30s, the clown’s role—and importance—grew as he stepped in to distract the bull and allow its rider to get out of danger. Today’s rodeo protection teams, made up of highly trained athletes, are still a vital part of competitions—work that started with the clowns.

“The early clowns were cowboys who could rope and ride with the best of them ... and they were, above all, showmen,” wrote Jeanne Joy Hartnagle-Taylor in her 1993 book *Greasepaint Matadors*.

Sublett fit that description perfectly.

He picked up a trained mule named Spark Plug that he claimed could be taught to do just about anything, and together the duo performed in rodeos throughout the U.S. and abroad, including shows in London, Paris and Dublin. They also performed in films with actors Wallace Beery, Bob Steele and Pearl White.

Spark Plug died in Fort Worth in 1931, and Red’s career began sliding to an end. He died from a heart condition in the veterans hospital in Dallas on April 14, 1950.

His headstone reads, “World Famous Dean of Rodeo Clowns.” ■

Candies and Fudge

Can't beat these treats—and no baking is involved

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

My *mami* has been whipping up these delights every holiday season for as long as I can remember. She had us kids shaping coconut balls by the dozen. She gifted them, served them at family gatherings and even shipped them to relatives.

No-Bake Chocolate Coconut Joys

¼ cup (½ stick) butter, melted
1½ cups sweetened shredded coconut
1 cup powdered sugar
½ cup semisweet chocolate chips
¼ cup chopped pecans

1. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. In a large bowl, stir together butter, coconut and sugar. Shape into 1-inch balls. Place on prepared baking sheet.
3. Gently press your thumb or the back of a teaspoon measuring spoon to make an indentation in the middle of each ball.
4. In a microwave-safe bowl, heat chocolate chips in 30-second increments, stirring each time, until fully melted.
5. Fill each indentation with melted chocolate. Sprinkle with pecans. Refrigerate until firm.

MAKES 24 PIECES

TCP Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in *Cocina Gris* at sweetlifebake.com, where she features a recipe for Concha Bark.





Aunt Ruth's Candy Cornflakes

TAMMY CARR
SAM HOUSTON EC

It doesn't get much simpler than this. These easy, quick, no-bake peanut butter treats are a perfect mix of sweet and crunchy.

1 cup corn syrup
1 cup sugar
1¼ cups peanut butter
6 cups cornflakes

1. Line 2 baking sheets with wax paper and set aside.
2. Combine corn syrup and sugar in a large saucepan and bring to a boil, stirring continuously until sugar is melted.
3. Remove from heat, add peanut butter and mix well.
4. Add cornflakes and mix to combine. Drop by spoonfuls onto wax paper to create a rounded candy. Cool until set and firm.

MAKES 24 PIECES



\$500 WINNER

Pumpkin Fudge

GERI HUPP
DEEP EAST TEXAS EC



Hupp's pumpkin fudge with white chocolate and cinnamon is sure to be a hit with candy lovers. It's creamy, smooth and perfect for the fall. I advise making a triple batch because this rich fudge will go fast!

¾ cup evaporated milk
2½ cups sugar
¾ cup canned pumpkin purée
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon salt

1 jar marshmallow crème (7 ounces)

2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter
1 cup white chocolate chips
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1. Line a 9-by-9-inch baking pan with aluminum foil and set aside.
2. In a large saucepan, heat evaporated milk and sugar over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally. Bring to a boil.
3. Stir in pumpkin purée, cinnamon and salt. Return to a boil.
4. Stir in marshmallow crème and butter. Return to a boil. Cook, stirring occasionally, 18 minutes.
5. Remove from heat. Add chocolate chips and vanilla. Stir until creamy and all chocolate chips are melted.
6. Pour into prepared pan. Cool completely until firm.
7. Remove from pan and cut into squares. Store in a cool, dry place.

MAKES 16 PIECES

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

BARBECUE SIDES DUE OCTOBER 10

Superior sides can make a good barbecue great. For our March issue, we're serving up your best fixin's, with the top trimming earning \$500.

UPCOMING: FIVE-INGREDIENT DINNERS DUE NOVEMBER 10



CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 >

Confetti Fudge

LINDA FOREMAN
TRINITY VALLEY EC

This is the prettiest fudge I have ever made. Flecks of dried fruit swirled into a creamy white chocolate marshmallow base really do give the appearance of festive confetti.

**¾ cup (1½ sticks) butter, plus
more to grease pan**

3 cups sugar

¾ cup sour cream

**1 package white chocolate chips
(12 ounces)**

1 jar marshmallow crème (7 ounces)

¼ cup chopped dried cranberries

½ cup chopped dried apricots

¼ cup chopped golden raisins

1. Butter a 9-by-13-inch baking pan.

2. In a large saucepan, combine butter, sugar and sour cream over medium-high heat. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium and cook 5 minutes, stirring



constantly to prevent scorching.

3. Remove from heat and stir in white chocolate chips and marshmallow crème until smooth.

4. Stir in cranberries, apricots and raisins. Carefully pour into prepared pan.

5. Cool completely until firm. Cut into individual servings.

MAKES 12 PIECES

Sweet Sentiments

This upcoming holiday season, I'm gifting edible treats wrapped to impress! Here are a few fun ideas that take gifting to the next level.

A candy-filled Mason jar makes for a great reusable gift. Layer with parchment paper, top with a lid and tie a vibrant ribbon.

Make use of spare tins. Embellish with greenery, ribbon, bows or cupcake liners filled with candy.

Wrap candy in cellophane then tuck it in a kitchen towel for two gifts in one. I love this look!

—Vianney Rodriguez

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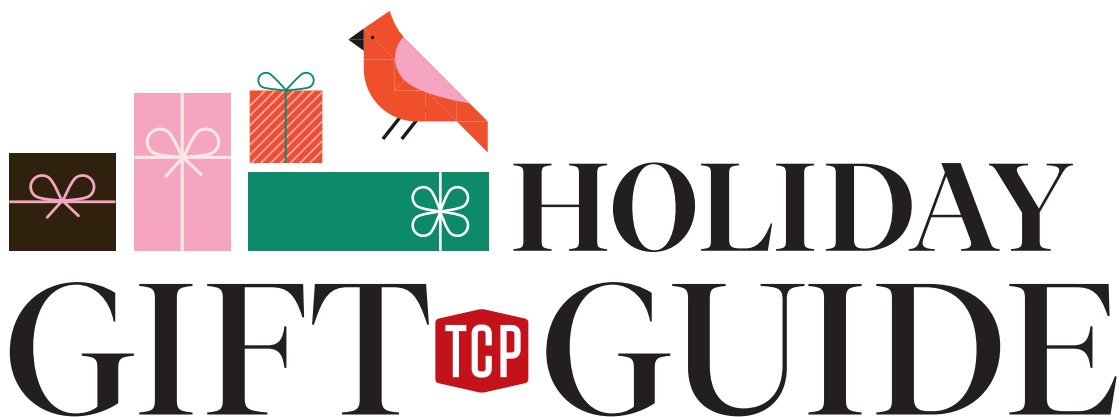
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HOLIDAY GIFT TCP GUIDE

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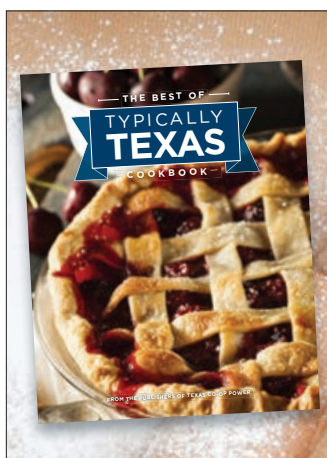


Texas Bluebonnet Calendar

Large 20-by-15-inch calendar with 12 watercolor scenes.

Enjoy nature's beauty year-round with this 2026 calendar by Texas State Artist George Boutwell. \$20 plus tax and \$4.50 shipping. See website for quantity pricing.

1-800-243-4316
gboutwell.com



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Fudge and Divinity for the Holidays

The Best Fudge in Texas.

The Best Divinity in the World.

Bring back those childhood memories of Christmas with the sweet gift of fudge and divinity from Holiday Farms.

holidayfarmscandy.com
divinitybydave.etsy.com



COURTESY CHET GARNER

Terlingua's Traces

Pay your respects at this ghost town's eerie, ancient cemetery

BY CHET GARNER

IF YOU HEAD TOWARD the Big Bend and then go into the region between the national park and state park, you'll feel like you're driving onto an alien planet. Sweeping desert views in every direction punctuated by rocky cliffs of tan and red are both beautiful and bizarre.

Eventually you'll reach the notable ghost town of Terlingua (population 130 or so), a few miles from the Mexican border. It's hard to imagine how folks live in such a faraway locale, but a trip to the cemetery confirms that Texans have been living out here for a very long time.

Like every tourist, I started my visit with a bowl of red at the Starlight Theatre, a destination restaurant built inside the stone shell of an old movie theater. After filling my belly, I wandered down the street and stepped onto the hallowed ground of the town's historic cemetery.

This is not your typical green acres of eternal slumber but a dusty patch of desert with uneven stacks of rocks marking graves, along with handmade crosses, rusted metal ornaments, plastic flowers and even a few beer bottles.

The silence was broken only by the wind and the abrupt buzz of a grasshopper that I kept mistaking for a rattlesnake. Most of the graves date back to the early 1900s, when families moved here to seek their fortune in the long-defunct mercury mines. Many of the graves note the same death year: 1918, when the Spanish flu ripped through the community.

As the last bit of sunlight disappeared behind the mountains, the graveyard glowed with a dusty kind of reverence. It's clear the community still feels a great deal of pride and connection to its past. It serves as a reminder that not all who wander to this part of Texas are lost, and some choose to never leave. ■

ABOVE Chet explores the graves at the century-old Terlingua cemetery.

TCP Watch the video on our website and see all Chet's 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.

OCTOBER

9

Groves [9-12] Pecan Festival, (409) 962-3631, grovescofc.com

10

San Marcos [10-11] Aviation Discovery Fest, (512) 396-1943, centraltexaswing.org

11

Corsicana Airsho, (903) 467-7170, coyotesquadron.org

Hillsboro Hill County Master Gardeners Tree Sale, (254) 582-4022, hill.agrilife.org

Luling Night in Old Luling, (830) 875-0123, lulingcc.org

Sanger Car and Motorcycle Show, (940) 395-1306, facebook.com/sangerpost268

Chappell Hill [11-12] Scarecrow Festival, (979) 836-6033, chappellhillhistoricalsociety.com

Edom [11-12] Art Festival, (903) 258-5192, edomarts.com

16

Lufkin Beatles to Bourbon Street: The Fabulous Equinox Orchestra, (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org

Mansfield Haunt the Block, (817) 728-3390, visitmansfieldtexas.com

Brenham [16-19] Texas Arts & Music Festival, (979) 337-7580, texasartsandmusicfestival.com

17

Dripping Springs [17-18] Lone Star Gourd Festival, (512) 964-5540, texasgourdsociety.org

18

Calvert Hooves & Heels
Historic 5K, (512) 639-7886,
historiccalvert.org

China Spring Oktoberfest,
 (254) 836-1825, stphilipcs.com

Llano Invitational Bullriding,
 (303) 912-1646,
llanobullriding.com

Waco Oakwood Cemetery's
Walking Tales, (254) 717-1763,
facebook.com/heartoftexasstorytellingguild

21

Hallettsville St. Peter
Lutheran Church Women
in Mission's Country Store,
 (361) 798-2808,
stpeterhallettsville.org

24

Palestine [24-25] Hot
Pepper Pop-Off and
Festival, (903) 729-6066,
palestinechamber.org

25

Flower Mound Smoke
& Whiskey Fest,
 (469) 360-7757,
fmsmokefest.com

Waxahachie Crossroads
of Texas Go Texan Country
Festival, (469) 309-4040,
waxahachiecvb.com

Granbury [25-26] Harvest
Moon Festival of the Arts,
 (682) 936-4550,
granburysquare.com

Grapevine [25-26] Trick 'R
Treat Trains, (817) 410-3185,
grapevinetexasusa.com

NOVEMBER

6

Round Top [6-9] Film
Festival, roundtopfilmfest.org

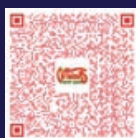
TCP Submit Your Event

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

Share the Joy



- Peace Plaza Ice Rink
- ICE! at Gaylord Texan Resort
- Christmas concerts & movies
- Shop & Dine at Grapevine Mills & Historic Main Street
- Enormous Christmas displays & decorations



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Each of these coins is recognized for its breathtaking beauty, and for its stability even in unstable times, since each coin is backed by its government for weight, purity and legal-tender value.

2025 American Silver Eagle: The Silver Eagle is the most popular coin in the world, with its iconic Adolph Weinman Walking Liberty obverse backed by Emily Damstra's Eagle Landing reverse. Struck in 99.9% fine silver at the U.S. Mint.



2025 South African Krugerrand: The Krugerrand continues to be the best-known, most respected numismatic coin brand in the world. Struck in 99.9% fine silver at the South African Mint.

2025 Canada Maple Leaf: A highly sought-after bullion coin since 1988, this 2025 issue was struck in highly pure 99.99% silver at the Royal Canadian Mint.

2025 British Silver Britannia: One of The Royal Mint's flagship coins, this 2025 issue features Lady Britannia, defender of Britain, struck in 99.9% fine silver at The Royal Mint.

2025 Australian Silver Kangaroo: For the first time ever, the kangaroo has rounded out the top 5 in the top 5 coins in the world. This gorgeous coin continues the Australian Kangaroo series' tradition of combining high precious metal purity with stunningly detailed designs. Struck in 99.99% fine silver at the Perth Mint.

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Heroes

They come from all walks of life and are our family, friends and neighbors. This month, please join us as we salute those who make a difference.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ

1 TAMRA BOLTON
CHEROKEE COUNTY EC

"My dad, Stuart McAnally (top row, left), and some of his 31st Naval Construction Battalion buddies before they shipped out to the Pacific theater in September 1944. They had no idea they would end up on Iwo Jima."

2 PEGGY MCCALL
CENTRAL TEXAS EC

"Tom Wertman, our neighbor and Sisterdale Volunteer Fire Department volunteer, fights a fire near Comfort."

3 VIRGINIA MURPHY
COSERV

"My daughter, Maureen, gave one of her kidneys to her brother, Sean, who desperately needed a kidney in 2023."

4 LAURA BOEHM
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

Marines breaching into Australia.



Upcoming Contests

DUE OCT 10 From the Oil Fields
DUE NOV 10 Still Life
DUE DEC 10 Gates



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

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



On the Dots

A little paint can go a long, long way

BY JULIE ROYCE
ILLUSTRATION BY RAUL ARIAS

A SHORT DISTANCE from where State Highway 62 meets U.S. Highway 96 sits a small white house painted with bright blue polka dots. Located in the small town of Buna, about 40 minutes north of Beaumont, this landmark was built by my grandfather, Virgil Newton Davis.

Some say this eccentric piece of history put Buna on the map.

I'm the daughter of Virgil's third son, Jud. I grew up on a family homestead in Buna until I was 14. Although I never had the opportunity to meet my grandfather, as a child I heard all kinds of stories about him.

Family described him as a hardworking man of few words with an odd sense of humor who loved his coffee black and bitter. I soaked up stories about his adventures throughout the Southwest,

busting broncos before settling in Kingfisher, Oklahoma, where he became a rancher and a father of six.

But he's a Texan through and through, and my Texas roots run deep because of Granddaddy. He was born in Newton County, in the Old Laurel community, in 1896. Although he left the state as a teenager, he returned just as the U.S. entered World War II, making his way to Buna with his family in tow.

In 1948, he built the Buna Polka-Dot House, a home that would become a part of my family's legacy. Virgil took inspiration from Native American homes that dotted the stark plains of Oklahoma. Those homes were colorfully embellished with petroglyphs and other designs. He decided to bring some of that color to the area just outside the Golden Triangle.

I often think about this modest structure, made of lath and plaster stucco and covered in blue dots applied with an old cloth attached to a two-by-four. Was he trying to create a bright spot among the dust and gray that was still clouding most of the South in the aftermath of the war and the Great Depression, or was this stoic man really just a jokester at heart? Maybe it was both.

Personally, I like to imagine him as a jokester. I mean, he was building a duplex with plans to paint horseshoes and teardrops on either side when he suddenly passed away in 1950. If that décor didn't make people laugh, what would?

Decades later the Buna Polka-Dot House is as meaningful to this small community as it is to my family. It's the backdrop of many community events, was the home of the chamber of commerce for a period and was the subject of many pieces of folk art.

My only wish is that Granddaddy had lived long enough to see how cherished it has become. ■



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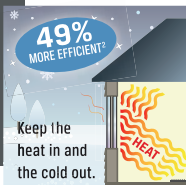


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OFFICIAL NOTICE OF THE 86TH ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2025

Crockett Civic Center | 1100 Edmiston Drive

Doors Open 4 p.m.
Member-Owner Registration 4–5:45 p.m.
Info Booths and Catfish Dinner..... 4–5:45 p.m.
Entertainment 4–5:45 p.m.
Business Meeting 6 p.m.

Every fall, members, directors, and employees of Houston County Electric Cooperative come together to discuss important business matters. To hold this meeting, a quorum must be present, either through your attendance or by submitting a signed proxy card.

If you are unable to attend this year’s meeting, please sign, date, and return the postage-paid proxy card located on the cover of this magazine. By returning your signed proxy card, you authorize the board of directors to represent you at the annual meeting of your cooperative and to cast a vote on your behalf.

It is the responsibility of each member to attend this annual meeting so that a quorum will be represented to transact the business of the cooperative. To attend the meeting, you should be present at the Crockett Civic Center in Crockett, Tuesday, October 28, at 6 p.m.

To be eligible for the prize drawings, you must register before the meeting begins.

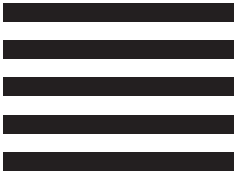


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DIRECTOR ELECTION INFORMATION

No petitions were received for the Board of Director elections this year. The following members were nominated by the nominating committee and accepted the nominations as candidates for the Houston County EC Board of Directors positions:



ANDERSON COUNTY
LARRY NELMS



HOUSTON COUNTY DISTRICT 3
CHUCK SIEMS



LEON COUNTY
GRADY WAKEFIELD

PROXY CARD INFORMATION

Drop your proxy card in the mail or bring it by the HCEC office during business hours.
By returning your signed proxy card, you authorize the board of directors to represent you at your cooperative's annual meeting and cast a vote on your behalf.

PLEASE FILL OUT AND RETURN TO HCEC BY MAIL OR DROP-OFF



PROXY CARD

As a member of Houston County Electric Cooperative, Inc. ("Cooperative"), I hereby appoint the board of directors of the cooperative as my agent and proxy to represent me at the cooperative's annual meeting of members to be held at 6 pm., Tuesday, October 28, 2025. I authorize the cooperative's board of directors, as my agent and proxy, to cast my vote on all matters coming before the cooperative's annual meeting of the members.

PRINT PRINTED NAME OF HCEC MEMBER ABOVE

SIGNED SIGNATURE OF HCEC MEMBER MUST BE THE SAME AS PRINTED ABOVE

DATE

PHONE NUMBER