

AGGIES' 12TH MAN
TURNS 100

SATISFYING
SOUPS AND STEWS

WINDOW SHOPPING
AT PRADA MARFA

Texas Coop Power

FOR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBERS

JANUARY 2022

In the Care of Canines

How rescue dogs
are learning
to help people



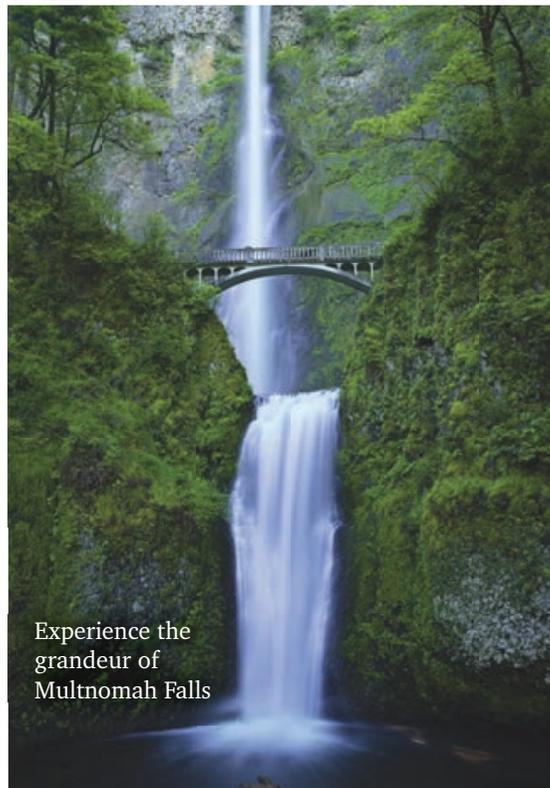


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A Texas organization trains rescue dogs to help people overcome challenges.

Story and photos by Laura Jenkins

Aggie Standouts

Texas A&M's 12th Man tradition, a spirit that 'engulfs you,' turns 100.

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By Martha Deeringer

ON THE COVER

Peter Slush, a firefighter and paramedic with Bexar County District 7 Fire & Rescue, shares affection with Rudy.
Photo by Laura Jenkins

ABOVE

Members of the 12th Man on the sidelines in the 1980s.
Cushing Memorial Library | Courtesy TAMU Press

High Alert

DON'T SAY THEY didn't warn you.

It's long been known that rattlesnakes rattle their tails to alert aggressors or distract prey. But researchers recently reported in *Current Biology* that when a perceived enemy ignores the initial warning, the snakes switch from a low- to a high-frequency rattle to give the impression they are much closer than they actually are. When the initial slow, steady rattling rate of 12 hertz is ignored, rattlers will dial it up to as high as 100 hertz.



TCP Listen to a rattler's rattle with this story online.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE THIS YEAR, I'M FINALLY GOING TO ...

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. Below are some of the responses to our November prompt: **A Texan Would Never ...**

Squat with their spurs on.

JULIE BAKER
BLUEBONNET EC
CALDWELL

Pick a bluebonnet.

TRACEY POWELL
TRI-COUNTY EC
ALEDO

Miss a chance to brag about Texas (and rightly so).

DONNA FALDYN
VIA FACEBOOK

Turn down barbecue.

THELMA BEASLE
LIGHTHOUSE EC
MEMPHIS

Ask someone else to finish their sentence.

JAY GEIS
HEART OF TEXAS EC
MOFFAT

To see more responses, read Currents online.

A COLD, HARD FACT

A fridge made 30 years ago uses almost four times as much electricity as a modern one.

66

distribution co-ops operate in Texas, from as far north as North Plains EC in Perryton and as far south as Magic Valley EC in Mercedes, and as far west as Rio Grande EC in Dell City and as far east as Jasper-Newton EC in Kirbyville. Co-ops power most of the state's landmass.



TCP Contests and More

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Weeknight Dinners

FOCUS ON TEXAS PHOTOS
Feathered Friends

RECOMMENDED READING

Where Birders Perch from April 2018 took readers to the World Birding Center, which spans nine sites in the Rio Grande Valley with ideal photographing opportunities.



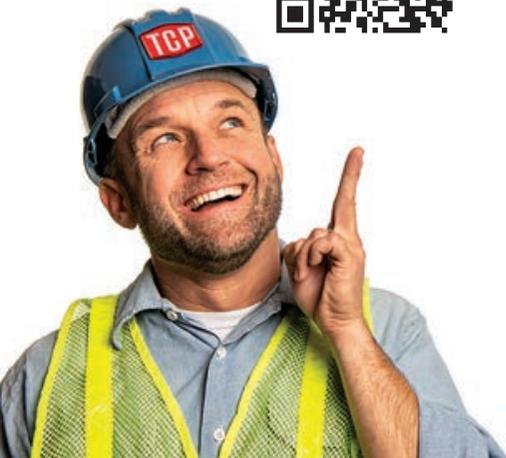
What's New, Chet?

TCP's website! The redesigned TexasCoopPower.com is easier to use and more mobile-friendly. Check out the latest in travel, history, recipes and personalities. Point your smartphone at the code below—and throughout the magazine—to get there pronto.



A Farsighted Mission

MOST ASTRONAUTS who spend at least a month in space return to Earth with impaired vision. And as NASA gears up for an eventual mission to Mars, which would require astronauts to spend at least 1½ years in space, the agency is turning to the Texas A&M University College of Medicine to study the effect of long-term spaceflight on the eyes and on the arteries, veins and lymphatic vessels that serve them and maintain vision.





DAVID MOORE

Dad's Service Station

“I too changed lots of tires and melted lots of hot patches on tires at Red’s service station on the side of the hill.”

EDDIE BOLCH
BRYAN TEXAS UTILITIES
BRYAN

The Tormenting Cries

I am thankful that Mary Ann Goodnight had a kind heart for animals [*Last of Their Kind*, November 2021]. It must have been tormenting to hear the cries of the bison calves whose mothers were slaughtered for their hides.

The U.S. government came up with the idea of killing off the bison to subjugate the Indians, and what a slaughter of immense proportions the idea produced.

The bison are as much a part of Texas’ and this country’s heritage as any other living thing. They have earned their right to survive.

Roberta McLaughlin
Heart of Texas EC
Lorena

My mom made meringue where it had little sugar tears [*The Alchemy of Egg Whites*, November 2021]. I could never get it right. She baked it on top of banana pudding. Fond memories.

LETA MASSEY
VIA FACEBOOK



EARL NOTTINGHAM | TPWD

Our Old House

I wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed Sheryl Smith-Rodgers’ article on the Bendele family house [*Not About To Fixate*, October 2021].

My kids all got a kick out of remembering the details you wrote about. It made us all smile.

Kathy Bendele
Pedernales EC
Hye

Agree—we don’t need to make everything new and shiny.

Roberta Dunn Dobie
Via Facebook

Meaningful Learning

I enjoyed the article about the Comstock high school kids doing research on Indigenous rock art with the Shumla Archaeological Research and Education Center [*Learning Rocks*, October 2021]. It sounds like a great way to engage kids in meaningful learning.

Felicity Hannay
Central Texas EC
Golden, Colorado

TCP WRITE TO US
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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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TEXAS CO-OP POWER Volume 78, Number 7 (USPS 540-560). *Texas Co-op Power* is published monthly by Texas Electric Cooperatives (TEC). Periodical postage paid at Austin, TX, and at additional offices. TEC is the statewide association representing 75 electric cooperatives. *Texas Co-op Power's* website is TexasCoopPower.com. Call (512) 454-0311 or email editor@TexasCoopPower.com.

SUBSCRIPTIONS Subscription price is \$4.44 per year for individual members of subscribing cooperatives and is paid from equity accruing to the member. If you are not a member of a subscribing cooperative, you can purchase an annual subscription at the nonmember rate of \$7.50. Individual copies and back issues for the previous 12 months are available for \$3 each.

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The Invention of the Year

The world's lightest and most portable mobility device

Once in a lifetime, a product comes along that truly moves people. Introducing the future of battery-powered personal transportation . . . The Zinger.

Throughout the ages, there have been many important advances in mobility. Canes, walkers, rollators, and scooters were created to help people with mobility issues get around and retain their independence. Lately, however, there haven't been any new improvements to these existing products or developments in this field. Until now. Recently, an innovative design engineer who's developed one of the world's most popular products created a completely new breakthrough . . . a personal electric vehicle. It's called the **Zinger**, and there is nothing out there quite like it.

"What my wife especially loves is it gives her back feelings of safety and independence which has given a real boost to her confidence and happiness! Thank You!"

—Kent C., California

The first thing you'll notice about the **Zinger** is its unique look. It doesn't look like a scooter. Its sleek, lightweight yet durable frame is made with aircraft grade aluminum. It weighs only 47.2 lbs but can handle a passenger that's up to 275 lbs! It features one-touch



Available in Green, Black (shown) and Blue



The Zinger folds to a mere 10 inches.

folding and unfolding – when folded it can be wheeled around like a suitcase and fits easily into a backseat or trunk. Then, there are the steering levers. They enable the **Zinger** to move forward, backward, turn on a dime and even pull right up to a table or desk. With its compact yet powerful motor it can go up to 6 miles an hour and its rechargeable battery can go up to 8 miles on a single charge. With its low center of gravity and inflatable tires it can handle rugged terrain and is virtually tip-proof. Think about it, you can take your **Zinger** almost anywhere, so you don't have to let mobility issues rule your life.

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POWER OF OUR PEOPLE

Furred Responders

A Texas organization trains rescue dogs to help people overcome challenges



FROM TOP Trainees at Service Dogs Inc. near Dripping Springs. First responders with Bexar County District 7 Fire & Rescue with Rudy. OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP Sheri Soltes, president and founder of Service Dogs, with Poppy, a trainee. Austin Meredith, a senior computer science student at the University of Houston-Clear Lake, and his service dog, Peaches, live on campus.



STORY AND PHOTOS BY LAURA JENKINS

The room was grim and silent, save for the rustling of papers. Lady, Rudy and Chanel—two yellow Labs and a golden retriever mix—slipped in as police officers studied security camera footage, surveying the aftermath of the shooting that left 23 people dead at an El Paso Walmart in 2019. The dogs knew what to do.

“Lady started making herself known to those who were going through security footage,” says Frankie Trifilio, Lady’s handler and one of three emergency medical services managers who flew to El Paso with the dogs from Methodist Healthcare in San Antonio to support first responders. “When Lady rolled on her back, a tall, muscular guy who looked like a member of a SWAT team asked me, ‘What is she doing?’

“I said, ‘She’s making herself available. She likes belly rubs.’”

The officer went back to what he was doing. But within a matter of minutes, he succumbed.

“He knelt down and started rubbing her belly, saying, ‘Oh come here. Who’s a good girl? Who’s a good girl?’” says Trifilio. “That was the catalyst for others to interact with the dogs, and suddenly everything came alive. Everyone started talking. There was laughter. When we left, people were communicating and collaborating. I can only speculate that it helped with the investigation. But I know firsthand that it helped those officers personally and emotionally.”

Providing trained dogs for people in need is nothing new to Sheri Soltes, founder and president of Service Dogs Inc., the organization that trained and placed Lady, Rudy and Chanel. An attorney by trade, Soltes was headlong into a successful career more than 30 years ago when she realized that the stress of the job was taking a toll on her health. She was living in Houston when she started thinking about a career change. At the time she had no idea what was next.

“One day I was at the eye doctor and picked up a maga-



zine that had an article about dogs helping people with disabilities,” says Soltes. “At the end it said that some of the groups used dogs from animal shelters, and that appealed to me because I’ve always been drawn to animals, especially those in need.”

Soltes saved the article and contacted organizations mentioned to find information that would help her build a nonprofit. She conducted a survey in Houston to see how many hearing-impaired people might be interested in a hearing dog; 75% answered affirmatively. Then she found a local dog trainer who agreed to visit shelters with her and help her find dogs best suited for service.

What began in 1988 as a home-based, one-dog-at-a-time endeavor has grown into a 6-acre campus near Dripping Springs, complete with a training facility, kennel and devoted team of trainers and caregivers. Even though SDI, a member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative, has placed more than 750 assistance dogs over the years, the operation is no assembly line. Soltes says they’ve developed an “artisan” approach to training because they select, train and match dogs to meet each client’s specific needs.

RIGHT Methodist Healthcare EMS relations managers and their dogs. BELOW Becky Kier, a former trainer at SDI, leaves the Humane Society of the New Braunfels Area with Lily, who is now in hearing dog training.

It might seem like any dog could be trained to mitigate any disability, but Becky Kier, former director of training at SDI, explains that when it comes to assistance dogs, one size definitely does not fit all.

“What they all have in common,” says Kier, “is that they’re all super sociable, obedient and have really good temperaments as far as loving and accepting all humans and animals. They’re not rattled by anything. But beyond that it comes down to the disposition of each individual dog. A hearing dog, for example, must take cues from the environment. We teach them what to do at first, but at some point, they have to take ownership of that.”

Kier says guide dogs for the visually impaired are hardest to find because they must be obedient and proactive without a lot of redirection. Even though SDI does not train animals to serve people with visual impairments, it does get a lot of “career-change” dogs from Guide Dogs for the Blind, the largest guide dog school in North America. Career-change dogs can have an excellent temperament, but they can also have qualities and traits that disqualify them from guide dog service.

“One of our recent graduates, Sensi, was released from GDB for not liking to work in the rain,” says Kier. “She didn’t want to guide through puddles. But she’s an ideal hearing dog.” Kier notes other examples of career-change dogs, such as Artist, who needed more supervision in the home than a blind person could provide, and Tootsie, who didn’t like the guide harness. “Dogs have idiosyncrasies just like people do,” she says.

Before the partnership with GDB provided career-change animals, all of SDI’s dogs came from rescue organizations. Many still do. For more than three decades, Soltes and her team have been searching animal shelters, offering a life of love and service to abandoned and unwanted dogs. Kier found Sherlock, a terrier mix, on a routine visit to the Humane Society of Central Texas. After his training, he was partnered with Megan Harris of Austin, who’s had a hearing impairment since she was 15 months old.

“Before he entered my life, I didn’t feel comfortable being left at home by myself,” says Harris, who has been partnered with Sherlock for more than eight years. “Anybody could enter the house at any moment, and I wouldn’t hear them. I worried about hearing smoke alarms, the doorbell and timers. Once Sherlock became my hearing dog, I felt more relaxed and at ease at home and in public.”

In the beginning Soltes was focused solely on the need for hearing dogs. But before long others began asking if she could train dogs to meet other specific needs, and SDI expanded its programs.



LEFT Patty Maginnis, a district court judge in Montgomery County, with Sumi, who provides victim support in the courtroom. BELOW Sherlock has been assisting Megan Harris of Austin for eight years.



“A couple of years into it, a young man who had become paralyzed from the shoulders down asked if we could train a service dog for him,” says Soltes. “Another woman with paraplegia did too. We weren’t sure, so we did two as a test run, and it was successful.”

Soltes thrives on the challenge of innovating new programs to meet the needs of those who seek help.

“A few years ago, we were at a Texas Medical Association conference in Houston and a battalion chief said to me, ‘Our suicide rate is approaching that of veterans. Can you help us?’” Soltes says. “I took that information, did some research, and we created a program that provides dogs to support first responders.”

Lady, Rudy and Chanel are a result of that initiative.

Soltes says it takes approximately \$50,000 to adopt, train and provide lifelong follow-ups for one dog. Despite that cost, SDI provides each one at no cost beyond nominal application fees and personal travel expenses. They rely on donors, sponsors, grants and fundraisers to operate. But Glenda Ann Kea says you can’t put a price tag on the profound difference SDI is making in the lives of Texans with disabilities. When her systemic lupus became debilitating, she got so depressed she stayed in bed for nearly two years.

“At that time the doctors were prescribing me tons of narcotics because I was in so much pain,” says Kea, who lives in Allen, north of Dallas. “I couldn’t get up on my own and I didn’t want to. I didn’t see the point. If I dropped something, my day was over because there was nobody there to help me pick it up. Seriously, I wanted to die.

“But when I got DaVinci, I had to brush him and feed him, so I’m moving and breathing and going outside, even if it’s only my backyard. When I’m in my bedroom, he can hear if something drops on the tile. He’ll get up, come in here and look at me like, ‘Do you need me to get that?’ Now I genuinely want to get up every day. In a very real sense, DaVinci saved my life.” ■

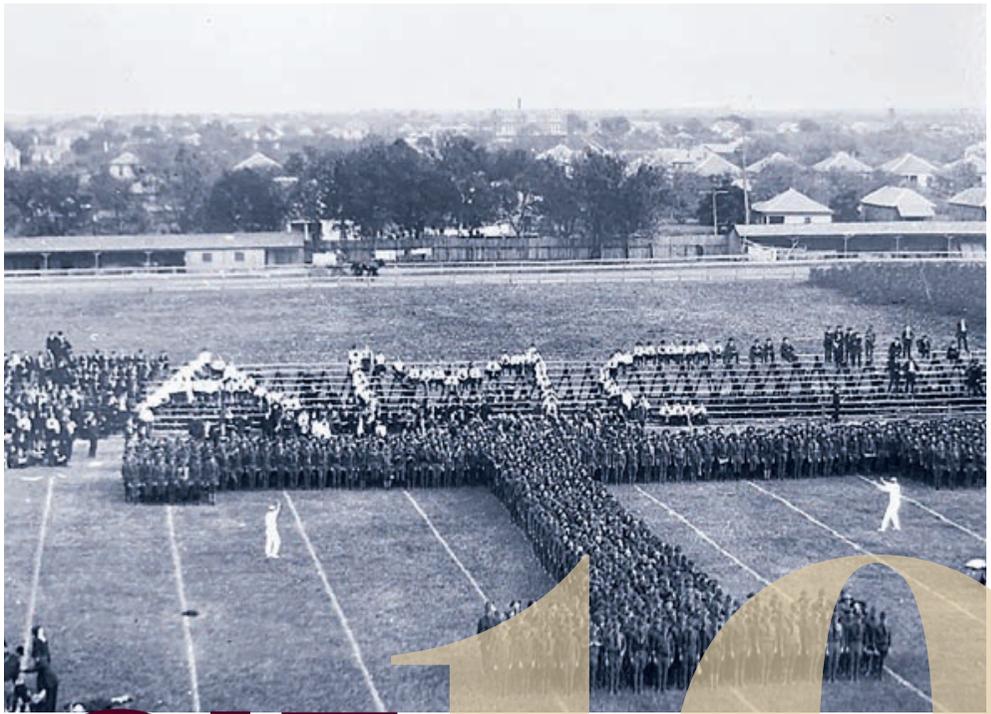


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TCP POWER OF OUR PEOPLE

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AGGIE 10 STANDOUTS

BY RHONDA REINHART

There are long shots—and then there are long shots. On January 2, 1922, at the inaugural Dixie Classic bowl game in Dallas, few fans thought the Texas A&M University football team had even a sliver of a chance at victory. The Aggies’ opponents, after all, were the top-ranked Praying Colonels from Centre College in Danville, Kentucky. Centre included three All-Americans and had just knocked previously unbeaten Harvard out of the No. 1 national ranking.

The outlook was grim for the Aggies. “We were absolutely the unmitigated underdog,” says author and historian John Adams, a member of A&M’s class of 1973. “The papers all had A&M losing 40 to nothing, 30 to nothing, 20 to nothing.”

Then came the bumps, bruises and fractures. A&M’s captain and quarterback, Heine Weir, broke his leg on the third play of the game, and that started a domino effect of injuries, including at least one concussion. “At that time—and I think it’s still a rule—if you can’t have 11 players out there, you have to forfeit the game,” says Adams, a Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative member. “So it’s getting close to halftime, and they have 11 players, but they’ve got five of them that are injured.”

What happens next is the stuff of legend and the beginning of one of Texas A&M’s most revered traditions. With things looking bleak, Aggies coach Dana X. Bible remembered a kid named E. King Gill, class of 1924.

Though Gill was a member of the football team, he wasn’t

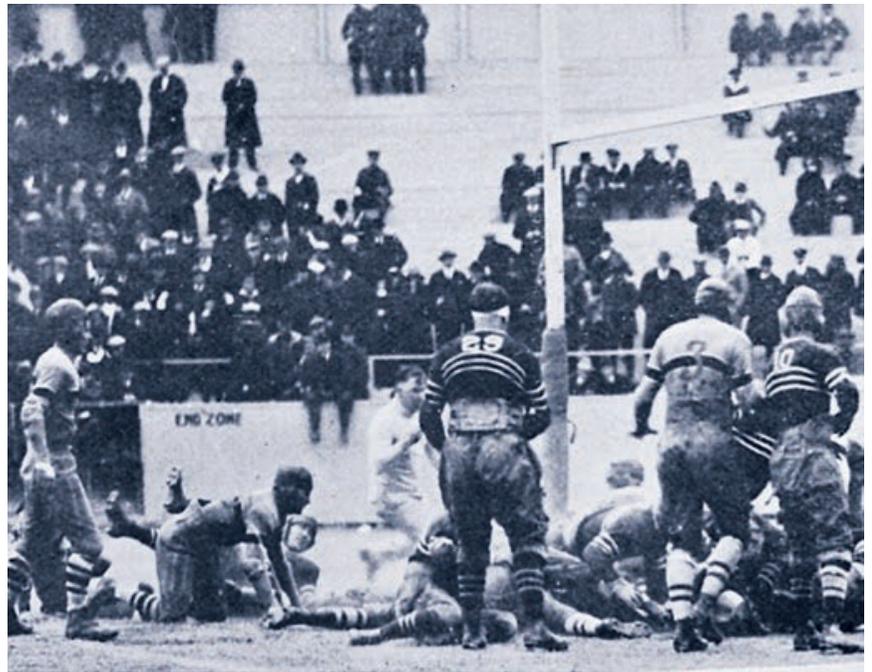
part of the squad traveling to the bowl game. He did, however, hitchhike from College Station to Dallas to see his buddies play at Fair Park, and he was up in the press box helping Waco sports writer Jinx Turner identify players on the field. But as the number of injured players quickly swelled, Bible had other ideas for the unsuspecting sophomore.

“All of a sudden, the coach turns and looks at the press box and waves at Gill,” Adams says. “So he comes out of the press box during halftime, goes under the stands—there’s no dressing room—and changes clothes with Heine Weir, the guy who broke his leg, and puts on his uniform. Gill comes out and stands on the sideline ready to go play. And then, little did they know, there is the beginning of the 12th Man.”

In Adams’ newest book—*Standing Ready: The Golden Era of Texas Aggie Football and the Beginning of the 12th Man Tradition*, published in December by Texas A&M University Press—he recounts the tale of the history-making bowl game, which was replaced by the Cotton Bowl Classic. Along with historical photos and little-known details from the game, *Standing Ready* features interviews with most of the major figures involved in the 1922 outing, including the bowl game’s founder, Joe Utay, class of 1908 and captain of the 1907 A&M football team, as well as Gill himself. “I spent five years working on this book, but I’ve been interviewing these guys for over 40 years,” Adams says. He interviewed Utay and Gill in the mid-1970s, before Gill died in 1976 and Utay in 1977.



OPPOSITE The block Aggie T formed at halftime by the Corps of Cadets at Kyle Field in 1920. LEFT E. King Gill, the original 12th Man. BELOW The Aggies make a goal-line stand in the 1922 Dixie Classic.



TEXAS A&M'S 12TH MAN TRADITION, A SPIRIT THAT 'ENGULFS YOU,' TURNS 100

One hundred years later, in honor of Gill and his willingness to stand up for his team, the A&M student section stands for the entirety of every football and basketball game. And what a student section it is. At every home game at Kyle Field, an average of 38,000 students decked out in maroon and white stand ready, cheering for their team and waving white flags emblazoned with "12th Man." A&M set an NCAA record for largest student section attendance in 2014 when 40,032 students watched the Aggies play Ole Miss.

Annie McGinnis, class of 2017 and director of communications at Tri-County Electric Cooperative, has attended A&M football games since she was a child. "I was born on Thanksgiving Day, so rumor has it I watched the first Aggie game with my dad the day I was born," she says. Her father, David McGinnis, class of 1990 and general manager and CEO at Grayson-Collin Electric Cooperative, confirms the tale. "She came at lunchtime, like 11-ish in the morning," David McGinnis says. "We played TCU that year, and she and I watched that game while Mom slept, sitting in the hospital."

Annie McGinnis describes the A&M student section as having a "spirit that pretty much engulfs you" and says that any potential discomfort from standing for four hours is no issue for Aggie fans. "There's so much adrenaline and camaraderie amongst the students who are standing with the 12th Man that you don't even think about your feet hurting because you're standing on wobbly bleachers," she says.

Cameron Smallwood, class of 1996 and CEO and general



Aggies captain Heine Weir, left, whose injury paved the way for the 12th Man, with coach Dana X. Bible.



LEFT The first A&M football team, organized in the fall of 1894. BELOW A letter from President Ronald Reagan to coach Jackie Sherrill recognizes the 12th Man.

TCP WEB EXTRA Enter online to win a copy of *Standing Ready: The Golden Era of Texas Aggie Football and the Beginning of the 12th Man Tradition*.

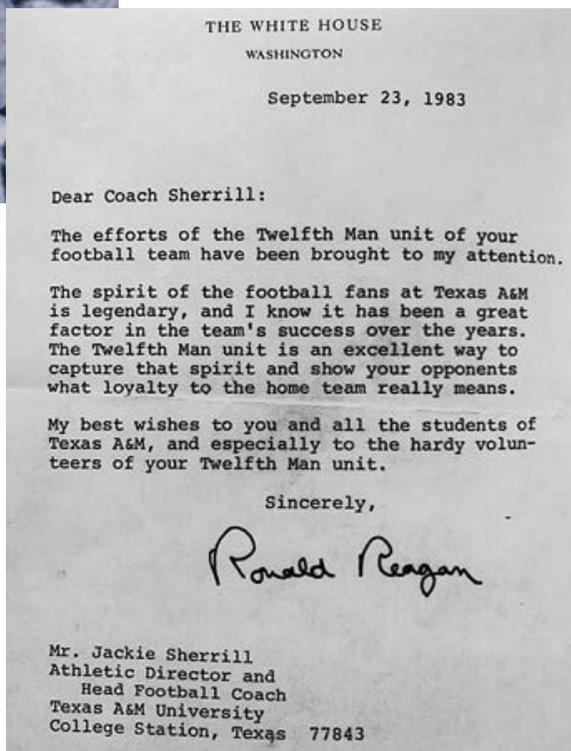


manager at United Cooperative Services, attended games as a student and has held season tickets for football and basketball games for many years since. “It’s like being part of a big family there cheering on the team,” he says. He likens the student spirit at A&M—and that eagerness to pitch in when needed—to working with an electric cooperative. “It’s a job with purpose,” he says, “so it fits our training pretty well.”

Like the McGinnises and Smallwood—and so many students before and after them—Gill never had to go on the field that winter day in 1922. The team didn’t need him to play after all. In fact, the banged-up country boys from College Station went on to win 22-14, accomplishing one of the biggest upsets college football has ever seen. The game made newspapers nationwide and, by Adams’ estimation, put Texas football—and Texas sports in general—on the map.

“It put a spotlight on sports in the state of Texas. That’s what the Dixie Classic did,” Adams says. “There had been some great SMU teams during that time. There had been some good TCU teams. University of Texas had a good team in 1919. But none of them got any attention—no All-Americans, no recognition, no ranking.”

While attention and accolades are, of course, welcomed with open arms, those aren’t what propel Aggie students to show up on game day, 12th Man towels in hand, and stand for their team. Gill, a longtime Corpus Christi physician, possibly said it best. In a 1964 campus speech, without even



a whiff of self-aggrandizement, he talked about that day at Fair Park and his role as the original 12th Man: “I’ve never thought that the 12th Man really belonged to a personality. It belongs to the A&M student body,” he said. “And every one of you can be a 12th Man. You stand up—stand up for what’s right and be ready to serve.” ■

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100
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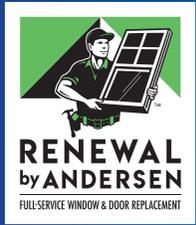


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MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER KATHI CALVERT

Resolve

OH, IT IS RESOLUTION time again. Fresh starts bring opportunities to assess where we are individually and as an organization. Self-reflection for Houston County Electric Cooperative allows us a chance to evaluate our performance and how we serve our members. We have core principles that are timeless and permeate our decisions as we plan for the future.

We hope some aspects of our cooperative culture never change. We always want you to know us, count on us and trust us. We strive to make positive contributions for our members and communities.

For newer members not accustomed to Houston County EC's service, we hope you'll find we are not like other utilities. We are local. Our employees are your neighbors. When you call us, you will speak to real people who are invested in serving you. When you see us working, please rest assured you can trust us. We will do our best to treat your property with respect, and we will only access your property to maintain our distribution system.

Our goal is always to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy. How we achieve this goal evolves over time. Technological and communications improvements demand we change how we

operate. There is a new term in our industry, "beneficial electrification." While I am not crazy about the name, the term aligns with our values. Beneficial electrification means providing cheaper, greener energy while enhancing resiliency and reliability to improve your quality of life.

This year our board will assess our strategic position based on your needs and the anticipated energy market of the future. We will evaluate long-range plans and develop a road map for the next decade.

On this journey we will be sharing more information with you. We will explain ways you can save money individually and collectively with small changes in behavior. We will also address what investments we need to make to further benefit our members. Our actions over time can amount to significant savings while improving reliability. ■





Charlie Gardner Retires

LONGTIME HOUSTON COUNTY Electric Cooperative employee Charlie Gardner officially retired at the end of August 2021, closing out a successful career that spanned over four decades at the co-op.

Gardner began his tenure at HCEC at age 20 in June 1980 as a helper. Throughout his years of service and dedication to the cooperative and its members, Gardner climbed through the ranks and held many different positions, ranging from serviceman and right-of-way and safety superintendent to manager of the dispatch department and, lastly, staking and field services manager.

Gardner was also heavily involved in providing electrical safety education to area elementary school students, a task he was passionate about. Gardner's contributions go well beyond HCEC as he has served on several boards and steering committees for safety and loss control, the Crockett Lions Club, Kilgore Lineman College, and served other organizations throughout the years. ■

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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.

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To check your account balance or make a payment using the automated system, press 3.
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To connect, disconnect or transfer service, press 6.
To report outdoor lighting issues or other nonemergencies regarding your electric service, press 7.

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houstoncountyelec.com



Check us out at
TexasCoopPower.com/houston

Business Unusual: HCEC Hosts First Drive-Thru Annual Meeting

ON PERHAPS THE windiest day of 2021, Houston County Electric Cooperative employees manned their stations at our headquarters in Crockett and welcomed members to the 82nd annual meeting. While line crews were out working outages, other HCEC personnel were registering members, providing information on how to access this year's annual meeting report, giving out gift bags and providing attendees with their long-awaited plate of fried catfish to go.

The board of directors voted to host a drive-thru annual meeting in lieu of the traditional in-person meeting to protect our members and employees. A total of 407 members registered by proxy and roughly 875 plates of catfish were made.

We were unsure on what to expect for our first drive-thru annual meeting format. We're thankful for our members who adapted with us this year. All registered members had their names placed into a drawing for door prizes, and following the drive-thru meeting, the cooperative went live on Facebook to name the lucky prizewinners.

The board of directors of Houston County EC would like to thank everyone who attended this year's annual meeting. ■

See you
NEXT YEAR!



Do-It-Yourself Home Energy Audit



INVESTING IN ENERGY EFFICIENCY may sound like it requires a lot of effort, time and money, but it doesn't have to. While there are certainly high-impact and high-cost measures, you can also take smaller steps to make your home more energy efficient, help you save money and live a more comfortable life.

Here are some simple measures you can take to conduct your own home energy audit.

Shut off your electronics, appliances and lights when they are not being used. Some electronics, such as TVs and smartphone chargers, can draw power even when turned off—what's known as phantom loads. To prevent these devices from wasting electricity, consider completely unplugging them or shutting off the power strips they're connected to.

Swap out incandescent bulbs with LEDs to use 75% less lighting energy. The features to pay most attention to with LEDs are lumens (how bright the bulb is) and color temperature (how warm or cool the light is). For example, a 10-watt LED can emit the same light as a 60-watt incandescent.

Replace air filters. A clean filter allows your heating system to run more efficiently and keeps the air in your home cleaner. Most air filters should be changed every one to three months, but during heavy use, changing monthly is a good idea.

Set your thermostat to auto and keep an eye on the temperature to ensure the heater is running only when it's supposed to. Try to keep your thermostat to the coolest comfortable temperature in the winter and the warmest comfortable temperature in the summer. In the winter shoot for 68 degrees and in the summer 78.

Have your ductwork checked for leaks because leaks at the return, air handler and supply can be a major source of high bills. In mobile homes, check at the grille, crossover duct and down flow air handler.

Wash only full loads of clothes and dishes, and use cold water when possible. When dishwashing, try air drying instead of heat drying.

Invest in low-flow showerheads and faucets that use less water and can save money and energy by reducing demand on your water heater. Look for one with the WaterSense label, which indicates that the product meets criteria set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to reduce energy use without compromising performance.

Look for appliances with the Energy Star label. This designation means the appliance has undergone testing to ensure it performs as expected and reduces energy consumption. ■

Kale and Meatball Soup

8 ounces ground beef (sirloin or round)
4 ounces ground pork
½ cup diced onion, divided use
1 clove garlic, minced
¼ teaspoon coarse sea salt
¼ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
¾ teaspoon of your favorite herb or spice mixture, divided use
1 slice white bread (crust removed)
3 tablespoons milk
8 cups beef or chicken broth
1 can (15 ounces) small white beans, drained
1 large carrot, diced
3 cups kale, or more to taste, washed and chopped

1. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Combine beef, pork, ¼ cup onion, garlic, salt, pepper and ¼ teaspoon of the spice mixture.
2. Moisten the bread with the milk and then add to the meat mixture. Roll the mixture into small (about 1-inch) meatballs and place them in a single layer on a rimmed baking sheet.
3. Bake the meatballs about 20 minutes, until firm and lightly browned. Drain excess grease from meatballs and pan.
4. Combine the broth, remaining onion, white beans, diced carrot and remaining ½ teaspoon of spice mixture in a soup pot and cook over medium-high heat. Bring the mixture to a boil, then add meatballs and chopped kale. Reduce heat and simmer about 15 minutes.

TCP Find this and more delicious recipes online at [TexasCoopPower.com](https://www.texascoopower.com).





1. Horace Davis and Toni Sailor in the center's kitchen, where home-cooked meals are prepared weekdays for citizens and neighbors of Apple Springs.

2. Cliff Coldiron, Houston County SHARE's director, second from left, and volunteers pause their daily operations to accept a check from HCEC staff.

3. South Anderson County Medical Association board members, in front of the clinic they rent out to medical and dental offices in Elkhart, accept a check from HCEC employees as part of the Sharing Success program.

4. Houston County EC employees present the Apple Springs Senior Citizens Center with their Sharing Success donation.

Sharing Success So Everyone Wins

HOUSTON COUNTY ELECTRIC Cooperative was established with the core value of assisting the membership and our communities. The Sharing Success program, made possible through the generosity of CoBank, allows Houston County EC to make a dedicated, lasting impact on the communities we serve.

CoBank's Sharing Success program was established in 2012. As of August 2021, over the past nine years, CoBank has contributed to over \$62 million in combined donations through Sharing Success by doubling the contributions to qualified charitable organizations.

In 2021, three non-profit organizations who, like Houston County EC, strive to serve their communities were granted donations from CoBank's Sharing Success Program. Apple Springs Senior Citizen Center, Houston County SHARE, and the South Anderson County Medical Association were all recipients of this year's grants.

The Apple Springs Senior Citizens Center, located at 15840 Highway 94 in Apple Springs, is in the hands of two dedicated individuals, Horace Davis and Toni Sailor. The center prepares home-cooked meals, including the Texas staple chicken-fried steak, and hosts community events such as bingo and game nights. With CoBank's matching contribution, the total amount donated to the Apple Springs Senior Citizens Center was \$10,000 to help ensure seniors receive hot, nourishing meals.

Much like the original directors who formed Houston County EC in 1939, the same story comes out of Elkhart with the South Anderson County Medical Association. They real-

ized there was a need for a medical facility and dentist office, so several like-minded individuals joined forces in 1978 and brought those facilities to Elkhart. For 43 years, folks from all over south Anderson County and even north Houston County have been traveling to Elkhart to receive health care. Johnnie Keeling and Thomas Vaughn accepted the check on behalf of SACMA and were very grateful for the \$5,000 donation from HCEC and CoBank.

Houston County Share is a volunteer organization in Crockett that provides assistance to Houston County residents in need. The organization works solely off donations of clothes, household items, toiletries, food items and more. Monetary donations are also welcome and used for other necessities such as utility bill assistance. Each year the organization hosts a Christmas toy drive for more than 600 children who would otherwise not have a gift under the tree. Each year, SHARE provides school supplies for children and hosts a Christmas toy drive for over 600 children who otherwise would not have a gift under their tree.

Houston County EC is proud to participate in the Sharing Success program because it is a wonderful way to give back to the communities we serve, especially when the donations are going to help facilities and programs our members utilize.

In 2021, Kathi Calvert, general manager; Freddy Wilson, procurement and inventory manager; and Sonja Key, controller, were able to visit each recipient's facility and present them with their check. We appreciate the partnership with CoBank and are grateful to give to organizations serving our communities and members. ■

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THE DEADLINE IS
JANUARY 21, 2022



Dead Certain

Evading a loan shark doesn't necessarily land the author in a better place

BY CLAY COPPEDGE • ILLUSTRATION BY DANA SMITH

ONE DAY IN THE SUMMER of 1981, as I drove my taxi west on Oltorf Street toward Lamar Boulevard in Austin, I spied an old friend from high school heading east. I stuck my head out the window to catch his attention and waved. The way he looked at me you would have thought I was waving a gun. "What the heck's eating him?" I wondered. He looked like he'd seen a ghost.

A few days later I stopped by to visit another high school friend, who seemed more annoyed than usual to see me. He had a request. "Would you do all of us a favor and let the people back in Lubbock know you're not dead?"

He told me that at our class's recent 10-year reunion, which I knew nothing about, my name came up when the Lubbock Monterey High School Class of 1971 took a moment to remember classmates who had passed on. I never went to much trouble to clear up the matter. Most of my friends from high school were a year younger than I, and we stayed in contact. Besides, I incorrectly assumed I would soon be famous and the matter would resolve itself.

Years later, after another report of my death at another reunion, another friend asked, "Have you ever *told* anybody you were dead?"

"No, of course not. Why would I do that? Oh, wait. Yes, there was that one time. ..."

It happened in 1980, not long after I started driving a cab. I got paid every day, and life was good until I missed a week of work because of illness and went on the disabled list again a week later after a wreck laid me up. It set me back. I got behind on my bills and only the benevolence of a sympathetic landlord kept me from the indignity of the couch circuit.

I found a loan company unwitting enough to loan me \$300, most of which I gave to my sainted landlord and the city of Austin as I continued along the comeback trail.

Lost along the trail was the loan company. The loan officer—*shark*, actually—took to calling me every morning about the time I drifted off to sleep after another 12-hour night shift in the cab. "Hello, deadbeat" became his standard greeting. He had little interest in my sad stories and expressed no remorse over interrupting my sleep. To my expanding list of woes, I now added sleep deprivation. The

loan shark promised to turn my account over to a collection agency.

"They won't be as nice about it as I am," he said without even a trace of irony.

And then one day, like the Grinch, I had a wonderful awful idea. I'd tell the loan company I was dead, and they would go away. *Brilliant!* The next time the phone rang at the usual time, a pleasant woman's voice asked for me by my full name. A dead giveaway, I thought. Collection agencies and bill collectors are the only ones who do that. She wasn't fooling me.

"I'm sorry," I told the woman with the soft and soothing voice. "Clay is no longer with us. He's gone to that great cab stand in the sky, I'm afraid. I'm here with his family, going through what he left behind. God knows it wasn't much."

The voice on the other end actually broke a little as she offered condolences. "I'm so sorry to hear that." Sure she was. No commission. I managed a fake sob, hung up and went back to sleep. I don't know if the loan company ever called again or not because the phone company came and took away my phone the very next day.

After I explained all this to my friend, he suggested that maybe the woman who called me that day wasn't from a collection agency. Maybe she was from the Monterey reunion committee. Hmm. She *did* seem genuinely affected by my sorry piece of fake news. But life went on, and I didn't give the matter much thought until August 2021, as our class's 50-year reunion approached.

I received emails from classmates who had seen stories and books with my name attached and wondered, I suppose, if all my publications were of the posthumous sort. I wrote back, slightly misquoting Mark Twain to the effect that "reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated." I didn't mention that I was the one who had done the exaggerating.

A week later I received an email informing me that my name, after 40 years, had been removed from the class of 1971 memorial list.

Beware, former classmates. I am at large. ■



SACRED STONE OF THE SOUTHWEST IS ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION



Centuries ago, Persians, Tibetans and Mayans considered turquoise a gemstone of the heavens, believing the striking blue stones were sacred pieces of sky. Today, the rarest and most valuable turquoise is found in the American Southwest— but the future of the blue beauty is unclear.

On a recent trip to Tucson, we spoke with fourth generation turquoise traders who explained that less than five percent of turquoise mined worldwide can be set into jewelry and only about twenty mines in the Southwest supply gem-quality turquoise. Once a thriving industry, many Southwest mines have run dry and are now closed.

We found a limited supply of turquoise from Arizona and snatched it up for our *Sedona Turquoise Collection*. Inspired by the work of those ancient craftsmen and designed to showcase the exceptional blue stone, each stabilized vibrant cabochon features a unique,

one-of-a-kind matrix surrounded in Bali metalwork. You could drop over \$1,200 on a turquoise pendant, or you could secure 26 carats of genuine Arizona turquoise for **just \$99**.

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Joined by a Fence

How rural America turned barbed wire into telephone lines

BY W.F. STRONG

HISTORIAN J. EVETTS HALEY noted that the XIT Ranch was probably the largest fenced range in the world, and its barbed wire enclosed more than 3 million acres. The huge enclosure helped manage enormous cattle herds and deterred rustlers but also gave rise to the creative use of a new technology: the telephone.

Consider these reports from other parts of the West. In 1897, *The Electrical Review* reported that “on a ranch in California, telephone communication had been established between the various camps ... by means of barbed wire fences.” Also in 1897, the *New England Journal of Agriculture* observed that two Kansas farmers, a mile apart, had attached phone instruments to a barbed wire fence that connected their farms and established easy communication.

The Butte Inter Mountain included this notice in 1902: “Fort Benton’s latest development is a barbed wire telephone communication.” The article points out that people of that part of Montana were not happy with barbed wire, but they had decided to look at its practical side and created a telephone exchange that would connect all the ranches to Fort Benton.

On the XIT, given that the ranch covered more than 4,500 square miles, there was interest in creating a communication system that would be more efficient than sending out fast riders to distant camps. “In the early 1900s,” Haley wrote in his 1929 history of the XIT, “a great many telephones were placed upon the ranch. Where possible, the top line of the fences was used as a telephone line, though the ‘service’ was atrocious. It did allow for

TCP WEB EXTRA

Listen to W.F. Strong read this story.



quick communication concerning emergencies such as grassfires that required all cowboys immediately.” There was even talk among technology geeks of the era that cowboys could carry phones wherever they went and clip on to the fence to report problems.

The rudimentary use of barbed wire on the ranches led to more creative thinking about rural phone systems. Historian Don Anderson, who earned a doctorate in electrical engineering from Stanford University, told me that barbed wire phone systems led to the conclusion that “using whatever is already in place is smart planning.”

So when rural Texas wanted to extend phone service from town to town, engineers decided they could use the existing rural power lines, already installed by electric cooperatives through the Rural Electrification Administration, and run the phone signal through the electric lines at a different frequency. That saved a lot of money and brought phone service along with electricity to rural areas.

Still, many ranches liked their barbed wire systems and kept them, even though the voice quality wasn’t very good. As late as the early 1970s, a dairy farmer I knew had a barbed wire phone running a half-mile from his house to the barn. He said it was good for talking to his wife about what time to come in for supper. But most of all, he said, “It’s free. I don’t have to pay Ma Bell nothing for that phone, and I enjoy thinking that it’s a burr in their saddle.”

It is fascinating, Anderson said, to consider that what started as a fence system on the XIT evolved into what is XIT Communications, a co-op that provides phone service and high-speed internet to rural communities—some in the footprint of the original ranch. ■

Soups and Stews

Stir up satisfying comfort food with a variety of ingredients

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Soups have always been a go-to dish in my house. Virtually anything can be turned into a soup, so even when I haven't been to the grocery store in a while, I know I can still throw something together. This Beef Bulgur Soup is an economical option, thanks to the tenderized round steak. Bulgur is a parcooked wheat grain that can be found alongside rice, quinoa and other grains. If you prefer, substitute a small pasta such as orzo or ditalini.



Beef Bulgur Soup

1 tablespoon butter
16 ounces tenderized round steak,
cut into ½-inch chunks
½ cup diced onion
2 tablespoons flour
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon pepper
½ teaspoon paprika
¼ teaspoon garlic powder
4 cups beef broth
2 sprigs fresh rosemary
1 cup diced carrots
1 cup diced celery
¾ cup bulgur

1. In a stockpot or Dutch oven, melt butter over medium heat. Add beef, stirring to brown on all sides. Add onion and cook until soft.

2. Mix together flour, salt, pepper, paprika and garlic powder, then sprinkle over beef and onion. Stir well to coat. Stir in beef broth, scraping any stuck bits in the pot as needed, then add rosemary. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low, cover and let simmer 25–30 minutes, until beef is tender.

3. Add carrots, celery and bulgur and continue to simmer, uncovered, 15–20 minutes, until vegetables are softened and grains have fully absorbed liquid. Taste and adjust salt and pepper as needed, and remove rosemary sprigs before serving.

SERVES 4–6

TCP WEB EXTRA Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Black Bean Soup.



Chicken and Ginger Soup

JENNIFER BRANNEN
BLUEBONNET EC

This Asian-inspired soup is heavy on ginger, livening up the senses whether you enjoy it for dinner or as breakfast leftovers, as Brannen recommends. Keep in mind that fish sauce is very salty, so add according to your taste.

- 12 ounces boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cubed**
- 3 ribs celery, chopped**
- 1½ ounces peeled ginger root, minced (about ⅓ cup)**
- ½ cup finely chopped cilantro**
- 7–8 cups low-sodium chicken broth, divided use**
- 3–4 tablespoons fish sauce**
- 2 cups cooked long-grain white rice**
- Green onions, thinly sliced**
- 1 serrano pepper, thinly sliced**
- Fried garlic chips**

COOK'S TIP Make fried garlic chips by frying ¼ cup of thinly sliced garlic cloves in ½ cup of canola oil until golden. Strain the garlic through a sieve but keep the garlic-infused oil for other uses.

1. In a large stockpot or Dutch oven set over medium-high heat, combine chicken, celery, ginger, cilantro, 6 cups broth and fish sauce and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer 30–45 minutes.
2. Stir in cooked rice and continue to simmer until the rice has absorbed the broth. Add the remaining broth if needed. Serve with green onions, serrano pepper and garlic chips on the side.

SERVES 4–6

[MORE RECIPES >](#)

\$500 WINNER

Chicken and Dumplings Soup

AMANDA DECESARO
TRINITY VALLEY EC



Perfect for chilly nights, chicken and dumplings are the ultimate comfort food. Mix the dumpling batter just before adding to the soup to retain the best texture.

SERVES 6



SOUP

- 1½–2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs**
- 3 tablespoons butter**
- 1 yellow onion, diced**
- 1 teaspoon pepper**
- 1½ teaspoons salt**
- 1 teaspoon celery salt**
- 4 cups unsalted chicken stock**
- 1 cup water**
- 2 bay leaves**
- 3 cups baby carrots or chopped carrots**

DUMPLINGS

- 1½ cups flour**
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh parsley**
- 2 teaspoons baking powder**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- ⅓ teaspoon ground nutmeg**
- ⅔ cup milk**
- 1 egg, slightly beaten**
- ⅓ cup (¼ stick) butter, melted and cooled**

1. **SOUP** In a large stockpot or Dutch oven set over medium-high heat, brown chicken with butter. Once browned, cut into small strips, then return to pot and add onion. Sprinkle in pepper, salt and celery salt. Sauté until onions are slightly cooked but not soft.

2. Add chicken stock, water and bay leaves. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low and cover. Let simmer 10 minutes. Add carrots and simmer, covered, for an additional 15 minutes.

3. **DUMPLINGS** Mix together the dry ingredients. Add milk, egg and butter and stir until just blended.

4. When ready to add dumplings, remove bay leaves from soup, taste, and adjust salt and pepper as needed. Drop spoonfuls of dumpling batter into pot, spacing as much as possible. Cover and simmer 15 minutes, until dumplings are no longer doughy. Serve soup with a few dumplings in each bowl.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

WEEKNIGHT DINNERS DUE JANUARY 10

We're looking for go-to recipes for busy weeknights. Submit yours at [TexasCoopPower.com/contests](https://TexasCoopPower.com/) by January 10 for a chance to win \$500.





Potato Leek Soup With Dill

REXANNE MEAUX
PEDERNALES EC

Potato soup always hits the spot, and dill adds bright flavor to Meaux's version. To wash the leeks completely, slice and add them to a bowl of cold water, swirling to dislodge any dirt between the layers.

- 1 tablespoon butter**
- 3 large leeks, thinly sliced and washed (white and light green parts only)**

- 2 large russet potatoes, peeled and cubed**
- ¾ cup white wine, divided use**
- 4 cups chicken broth**
- 1 cup heavy cream**
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill, plus more to taste**
- ¾ teaspoon salt**
- ½ teaspoon pepper**
- Fresh dill sprigs, for garnish**

- In a stockpot or Dutch oven, melt butter over medium heat. Add leeks and sauté 10 minutes or until tender. Add the potatoes, ½ cup wine and broth. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low and simmer, uncovered, 1 hour and 15 minutes or until the potatoes are very tender.
- Transfer soup in batches to a blender and blend until smooth. Return the soup to the pot and add remaining ¼ cup wine, heavy cream, dill, salt and pepper. Heat through and serve, garnishing bowls with fresh dill.

SERVES 4-6

Soup Improv

BY MEGAN MYERS

Looking for ways to riff on your soup recipe? Try one (or a few) of these ideas:

Add a cheese rind. Parmesan rinds add umami, which enhances the other flavors in your soup.

Finish with lemon to brighten the flavor. This works especially well in chicken soups.

Serve with a dollop of sour cream or yogurt for tang.

Chopped fresh herbs are a great finish to any soup.

Thicken soups without cream by puréeing beans or vegetables from the soup and adding them back in.

Brown the meat for full flavor, and deglaze the pan with a small amount of white or red wine, depending on the recipe. The alcohol will cook off, leaving only the flavor behind.

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- ✓ Buffalo Nickel (1913–1938)
- ✓ Jefferson “War” Nickel (1942–1945)
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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Faux Chic, for Sure

Like a desert mirage, Prada Marfa perplexes

BY CHET GARNER

I'M NOT A SHOPPER and never have been. So I was having an internal struggle when I found myself driving more than seven hours from my Central Texas home to visit a high-end designer retail store in the desert.

Why was I dedicating so much time to this quest when I don't even know Versace from Vuitton? Those are different, right?

But once I arrived at the remote outpost known as Prada Marfa, the answer became clear.

I reached Marfa in record time but was disappointed to learn that my destination was still 36 miles west. I cruised U.S. 90 parallel to a set of train tracks for what seemed like hours, past the crumbling set of the movie *Giant* and through the tiny town of Valentine. I was about to turn around thinking I had missed my destination when I spied a boxy building up the road on my left. I pulled over and stepped into the Texas heat.

This was Prada Marfa, a stark white building that looks like an honest-to-goodness boutique storefront beside an empty highway. It's as if anyone could walk in, slap down some cash and leave with the fanciest footwear in West Texas. However, at this Prada store there is no staff. They don't accept credit cards. In fact, the front door doesn't even open. Because even though it looks authentic, Prada Marfa is a permanent work of art constructed in 2005 by the Swedish duo Elmgreen & Dragset as a comment on consumerism.

I peered through the window at displays of thousand-dollar purses and a wall of elegantly lit high-heeled shoes. I chuckled, wondering if anyone ever trekked out here expecting to buy designer items and left disappointed. I was happy to only window-shop, but even that cost me 14 hours on the road. ■

ABOVE Chet visits the art installation called Prada Marfa, along U.S. 90, about halfway between Marfa and Van Horn.

TCP WEB EXTRA Watch Chet's dispatch from Marfa at TexasCoopPower.com/travel. And to see the front doors Chet does make it through, watch his *Texplorations* on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

Call ahead or check an event's website for scheduling details.

JANUARY 08

Frisco NCAA Division I FCS Football Championship, (972) 292-5250, visitfrisco.com

Kerrville Symphony of the Hills: Outlaws and Heroes, (830) 792-7469, symphonyofthehills.org

Monahans Sandhills Resolution Run, (432) 943-2187, monahans.org

San Marcos Purgatory Trail Run, (877) 806-3987, athleteguild.com

Temple Family Day—Cabin Fever: Stargazing, (254) 298-5690, templeparks.com

Boerne [8–9] Market Days, (210) 844-8193, boernemarketdays.com

Dallas [8, 15, 22] The Dinner Detective Murder Mystery Dinner Show, 1-866-496-0535, thedinnerdetective.com

15

Fredericksburg Luckenbach Blues Festival, (830) 997-3224, luckenbachtexas.com

Granbury 7 Bridges: The Ultimate Eagles Experience, (817) 573-5548, thenewgranburylive.com

Lake Jackson Bird Banding, (979) 480-0999, gcbo.org

McKinney Night Hike, (972) 562-5566, heardmuseum.org

Mesquite Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration,
(972) 204-4925,
visitmesquitetx.com

**Fredericksburg [15-16]
Hill Country Gem & Mineral
Show,** (325) 248-1067,
fredericksburgrockhounds.org

16

**Fredericksburg Agarita
Chamber Players,**
(830) 997-6523,
fredericksburgmusicclub.com

17

**Elgin Martin Luther King Jr.
Walk,** (512) 281-5724,
elgintx.com

**Houston MLK Grande
Parade,** (713) 560-8328,
mlkgrandeparade.org

20

**Corpus Christi Third
Thursdays,** (361) 825-3500,
artmuseumofsouthtexas.org

22

**Fredericksburg Hill Country
Indian Artifact Show,**
(830) 329-2636,
hillcountryindianartifacts.com

**Irving Fela in Concert:
A Tribute to Whitney
Houston,** (972) 831-8818,
irvingsymphony.org

Orange CeCe Winans,
(409) 886-5535, lutchter.org

**Surfside Beach Food and
Art Festival,** (979) 233-1531,
surfsidetx.org

**Victoria Victoria
Symphony: José Feliciano,**
(361) 576-4500,
victoriasymphony.com

MORE EVENTS >

TCP Submit Your Event

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

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yagaschiliquest.com

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JANUARY EVENTS CONTINUED

22

Belton [22–23] Sami Show Marketplace, (512) 441-7133, samishow.com

23

Lufkin Popovich Comedy Pet Theater, (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org

27

Corsicana Asia, (903) 874-7792, corsicanapalace.com

29

Bay City Wild Game and Wine Camofest, (979) 245-8081, facebook.com/baycitycamofest

Grand Prairie Tom Segura, (972) 854-5076, texastrustcutheatre.com

Lufkin Brit Beat, (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org/pines-series

Port Aransas Home Tour, (254) 289-4510, portaransasgardenclub.org

Tyler Charles Yang, Violin Rock Star, (903) 566-7424, cowancenter.org

FEBRUARY

03

Tyler Beautiful: The Carole King Musical, (903) 566-7424, cowancenter.org

San Angelo [3–20] Livestock Show, (325) 653-7785, sanangelorodeo.com

05

Abilene Abilene Philharmonic: The Wonderfully Wicked Music of Oz, (325) 677-6710, abilenephilharmonic.org

Bellville Market Day, (979) 865-3407, discoverbellville.com

El Paso Shen Yun, 1-877-663-7469, shenyun.com/el-paso

Huntsville Sam Houston Square and Round Dance Association Presidents Ball, (936) 494-8402, shsrda.weebly.com/events.html

McKinney McKinney Philharmonic Orchestra: Music in Motion, (469) 633-9104, mckinneyphilharmonic.org

Sweetwater Lift Every Voice Art Show and Concert, (325) 235-5488, sweetwaterauditorium.org

Fired Up!

Whether getting the grill ready for a barbecue or watching the big game, Texans love to get fired up. So put another log on the fire and gather 'round because these offerings are smokin'.

BY GRACE FULTZ

1 TONYA CARLIN
CECA

"Being a mother of a firefighter, this photo represents the brotherhood shared between these individuals."



1

2 PATTY DISHMAN
PEDERNALES EC

"The hot air balloon festival in Horseshoe Bay always fires me up for great photo opportunities."



2

3 BROOKE WILLIAMS
TRINITY VALLEY EC

Homecoming parade in Forney.



3

4 CADEN WILSON
UNITED COOPERATIVE
SERVICES

Cowtown rodeo.



4

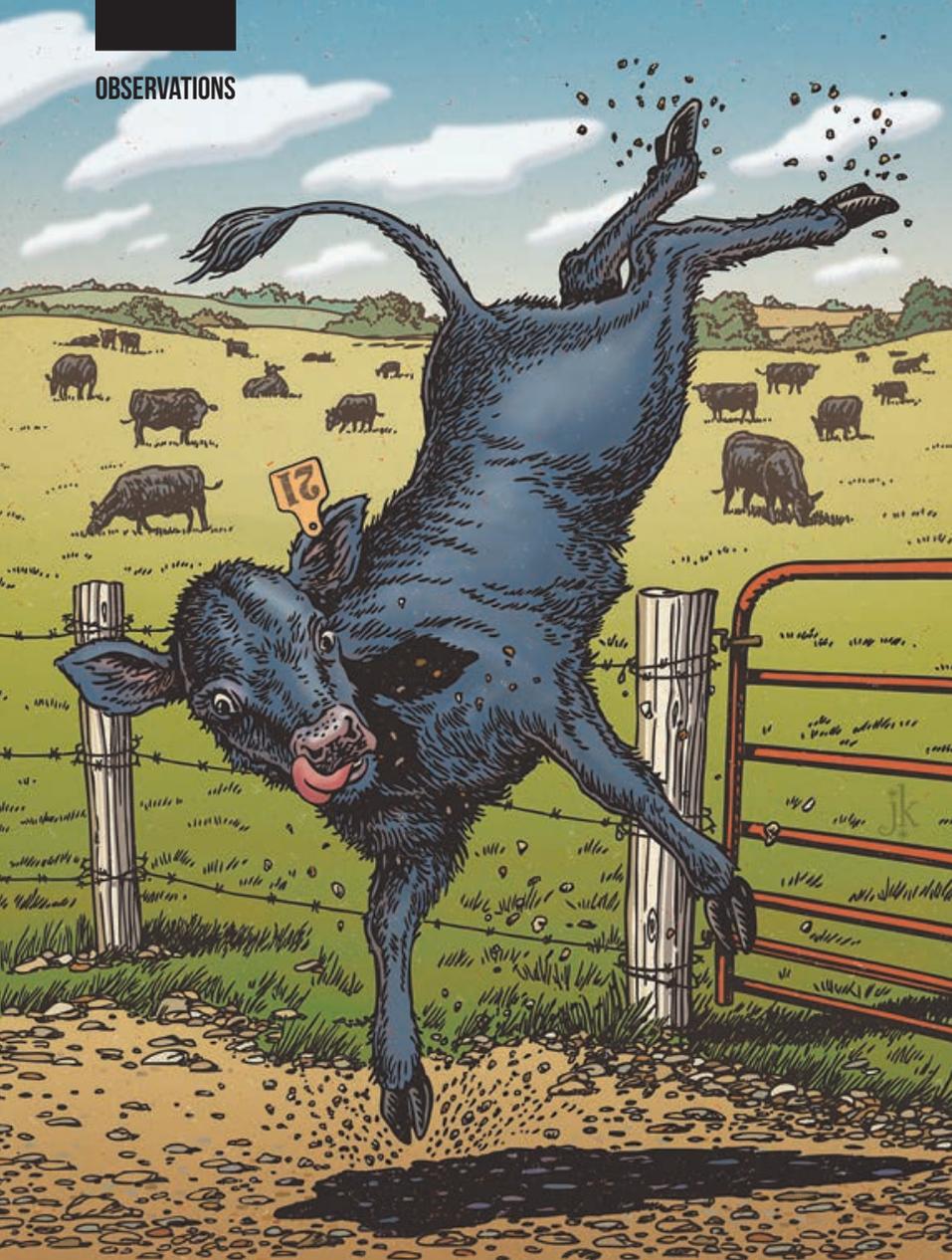
Upcoming Contests

- DUE JAN 10 Feathered Friends
- DUE FEB 10 Industrial
- DUE MAR 10 Morning Glory



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP WEB EXTRA See Focus on Texas on our website for more Fired Up! photos from readers.



Buck's Pluck

What we learned from a spunky calf

BY MARTHA DEERINGER
ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN KACHIK

LIFE LESSONS can crop up in the oddest places. Such was the case when an undersized black calf with an oversized personality was born on our farm a few years ago. A green hillside dotted with black cows and new calves is a tranquil scene. It's almost impossible to tell one calf from another without getting close enough to read the numbers on their ear tags.

Except for Buck Rogers.

Within hours of birth, Buck Rogers, a Black Angus bull calf, hopped in circles around his mother with that peculiar tippy-toed new-calf gait, flipping his stubby tail and kicking at the sky with his hind legs. While most newborn calves wobble for a day or two, Buck Rogers bucked and kicked across the pasture with total disregard for his mother's whereabouts. An inexperienced first-

calf heifer, Mama lumbered behind, bawling out warnings about the dire consequences of not minding your mother.

We almost never name cattle. If you grow attached to them, you might find yourself a vegetarian with a bank account drenched in red ink. Buck Rogers was the exception. It was easy to spot him: He was the small black blur galloping through the peaceful scene.

Most folks who own animals will testify that the critters have distinct personalities. Samuel D. Gosling, a University of Texas psychologist, agrees. "Animals have personalities, emotions and thoughts, just as humans do," says Gosling, who has published several articles on the subject.

Across the garden fence one afternoon, we heard a tremendous clatter, something like an explosion in an aluminum pan factory. Buck Rogers, awakening from a nap under a cotton wagon, had launched into one of his outrageous bucking episodes, his head and back hitting the wagon's underside with all the force his 70-pound frame could muster. He finally bucked his way out and dashed off, leaving me wiping tears of laughter from my face. Crystal clear was the notion that the little fella lived with *joy!*

Like his namesake, a fictional space opera character from the 1930s, the bovine Buck Rogers awoke each morning bent on new adventures. Chasing guineas set off a raucous squawking chorus that seemed to amuse him. Although he never reached outer space as his cartoon namesake did, he sometimes attempted flight by leaping into the air from the top of a large mound of manure scooped from cow and horse pens.

Eventually he grew up and moved on to pastures elsewhere, but he brightened our days and made us think about the importance of living with energy and enthusiasm. ■

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