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MARCH 2024

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# March 2024



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Haru, an Australian shepherd, works on his leaping skills.  
Photo by Tom Hussey

ABOVE  
The ring of fire during the annular solar eclipse October 14, 2023, as seen near Bandera.  
Photo by Erich Schlegel



# Channeling Safety

**WHEN DANNY WILLIAMS**, below left, started his career as a lineworker at McCulloch Electric Cooperative—which no longer exists—in 1965, color TVs were the latest technology coming into homes.

Williams and his co-workers in Brady made sure the power always stayed on for those TVs. “I loved linework,” he says. “I loved climbing.”

Williams later became an instructor, teaching work skills and safety to utility employees. And in 2007 he became manager of Texas Electric Cooperatives’ Loss Control program, where he changed (and likely saved) lives at co-ops across the state.

Williams, 80, will retire this month after more than 38 years of teaching generations of lineworkers, in a career that spanned seven decades.

“Oh, my God, how many people has he touched?” says TEC’s Curtis Whitt, a co-worker for 21 of those years. “Countless. To do it as well as he’s done it for as long as he’s done it is a pretty incredible feat.”

**TCP** Visit our website to read more about Danny Williams.



## A Power Trip?

Four electric school buses in South Burlington, Vermont, deliver more than students. When sitting idle during school hours, their batteries store excess renewable energy that can be pumped back onto the grid.

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### RECOMMENDED READING

Learn how Hoover Alexander, a fifth-generation Texan, came to run Hoover’s Cooking, a beloved Austin diner. See *A Full Plate* from March 2009 on our website.



## FINISH THIS SENTENCE

**Music makes me ...**

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

Here are some of the responses to our January prompt: **If I could turn back the clock ...**

It would mean that I finally figured out how to work the buttons.

GEORGE GRAHAM  
PEDERNALES EC  
WIMBERLEY

I would look at the clock less.

ROSIE PEÑA  
NUECES EC  
CORPUS CHRISTI

I would talk to my mom and dad for days on end—just to hear their voices again.

LISA STANLEY  
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES  
JOSHUA

Visit our website to see more responses.



## JANUARY 2024 Moment's Notice

# "There's an expression around Laredo: 'Six flags over Texas; seven flags over Laredo!'"

SHERI ULAN-SWEET  
BLUEBONNET EC AND CENTRAL TEXAS EC  
LEXINGTON AND FREDERICKSBURG



COURTESY CHET GARNER

## Required Reading

We love *Texas Co-op Power*. We home-school and use a lot of the recipes and articles in our lessons.

Karly Woods  
Via Facebook

## Shamrock Memories

My wife and I stayed at the old Shamrock Hilton on the last weekend it was open [*The Green Carpet*, January 2024].

The place was still amazing, but it clearly had a lot of deferred maintenance, making it look a little threadbare—a remnant of a time gone by.

In the lounge, if you ordered one drink, they would keep bringing you more of the same—I guess figuring that everything they gave away was one less thing they'd have to pack up or throw away.

Mike Blanche  
United Cooperative Services  
Morgan



COURTESY HOUSTON HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER | HOUSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

## What Desert?

When I flew from my Southern California hometown into San Antonio in May 1968 for U.S. Army basic training at Fort Sam Houston, I was surprised by a lush, green landscape (plus millions of crickets) instead of a barren desert [*How Texas Became a Desert*, December 2023].

Even more shocking was finding that the Alamo had been moved to downtown from the countryside where John Wayne defended it from Santa Anna's forces.

Steve Mallery  
Heart of Texas EC  
Robinson

## On Second Thought

I enjoyed Frederick Law Olmsted's assessment of Austin and New Braunfels [*Appraising the Texas Landscape*, November 2023]. I believe he would be appalled at the destruction of the natural beauty and wildlife he witnessed in the 1850s.

Harvey H. Wetz  
GVEC  
New Braunfels

**TCP WRITE TO US**  
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

Editor, Texas Co-op Power  
1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor  
Austin, TX 78701

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

Texas Co-op Power

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# A Midday Matinee for Millions

Where will you be when a once-in-a-lifetime  
total solar eclipse darkens Texas next month?





BY PAM LEBLANC

## Back in October

when the moon passed between the Earth and the sun in a celestial display known as an annular eclipse, I headed to Lost Maples State Natural Area in the Hill Country, donned a pair of goofy cardboard glasses and gazed skyward.

The field around me bristled with telescopes and tripods, all directed at the slow-moving phenomenon, which looked to my untrained eye like a frying pan slowly moving in front of a bed of glowing coals. Just as the moon lined up with the face of the sun, creating a halo of yellow, a cheer arose, and someone cranked up Johnny Cash's *Ring of Fire*.

As fun as that was, it was just the warmup for what's coming April 8, when Texans will get front-row seats at an even more impressive spectacle—a total solar eclipse.

The last total solar eclipse viewable from the U.S. occurred August 21, 2017—but Texas wasn't in the path of totality. Those who peered at it (through special safety glasses, of course) from here saw the moon's shadow creep across the sun but never fully blot it out. Other parts of the country experienced totality.

"A really good total solar eclipse is an emotional experience," says astronomer Phil Kelton, former assistant director and superintendent of the McDonald Observatory in Fort Davis. "They're awe-inspiring events, like nothing else in nature. The annular eclipse was a poor second."

In April, the eclipse's path of totality will cross Mexico, enter Texas near Eagle Pass, and slowly crawl northeast across the state. Kerrville, Bandera and Waco are all near the centerline, so watchers there will get a good show. Much of the Metroplex will experience totality, as will parts of Austin and San Antonio.

After crossing into Oklahoma and Arkansas, the eclipse will pass through 10 more states before moving out of Maine and into Canada.

The whole event—from the time the moon first bites into the sun—will last roughly 3 hours in Texas. But the duration of totality will vary by location. In Vanderpool and Ingram,

OPPOSITE Maxine Margolis Smith experiences the thrill of the October 14, 2023, annular solar eclipse from near Bandera. ABOVE The eclipse is projected onto a "screen" that Jeri Evans rigged from a bucket attached to a telescope in Vanderpool.



for example, it will last 4 minutes and 26 seconds; in Austin, farther from the centerline, it will last less than two minutes. The start of totality will also vary, occurring between 1:27 p.m. and 1:40 p.m. depending on where you're viewing.

During those few minutes, skies will grow significantly darker. It'll feel cooler, and some animals may exhibit twilight behaviors. If skies are clear—and chances of a clear sky are historically higher in Texas than they are farther north and east across the U.S. at that time of the year—bright stars will become visible.

"It's one of the great events of nature," Kelton says. "There's an element of majesty and awe that occurs during a total solar eclipse. Only in the last few hundred years has man understood enough about the cosmos to appreciate what was causing it."

Total solar eclipses occur every few years at different locations around the globe. After this year's event, an eclipse in 2033 will impact a small part of Alaska, and one in 2044 will affect Montana and the Dakotas. The next total eclipse to carve a broad swath across the country, though, won't take place until August 12, 2045.

Now's the time to plan. People are traveling to Texas from all over the world for the April eclipse, and many lodges and campgrounds in the path of totality are already booked.

Don't panic.

"The path is huge. You don't have to be in a special place," says Shaun Tarpley, an architect from League City who chases eclipses to photograph them. He and his wife, Ashley, an aeronautical engineer who works at NASA, traveled to Lost Maples with their son for the annular eclipse and plan to return to the Hill Country in April.



“There’s an element of majesty and awe that occurs during a total solar eclipse.”



LEFT Irene Ramos participates in a spiritual drum circle near Bandera.

“As long as you’re in the path, you can get out on the side of a road,” he says. “If you’re in the area, you’ll be able to experience it.”

When I drove to Bandera County for the annular eclipse, I spotted fields with hand-painted “camp here” signs planted among the ash junipers and oaks.

Eclipse watchers had gathered for a celebration at Stonehenge II, a scaled-down version of the British original on the lawn outside the Hill Country Arts Foundation in Ingram. (Festivities are planned next month, too.) And at Lost Maples, campgrounds and day-use areas were packed.

Among those I met was Frederic Allegrini, an astrophysicist and amateur astrophotographer from San Antonio who drove 2,500 miles in four days to see the 2017 eclipse in Tennessee. He and his wife wanted to be in the path of totality because, as he told her, doing anything else is like being 95% in love. “It has to be 100% or nothing,” he says.

And then there was Laura Hermann of Spring, who stood

at a table loaded with snacks and used a Moon Pie and a bag of Sun Chips to demonstrate how the eclipse would unfold.

For those with deep pockets, touring companies like Smithsonian Journeys offer luxurious guided tours through the Hill Country, with eclipse watching at Becker Vineyards near Stonewall and stops at other Central Texas sites.

For a less expensive experience, reserve a day pass at one of the Texas state parks in the path of totality. Enchanted Rock and Lost Maples will be popular destinations, but spots will fill up quickly. Reservations at Enchanted Rock open 8 a.m. March 11, and reservations for all other state parks open 8 a.m. March 8. Lower Colorado River Authority parks are another option, with special activities at some locations, including Black Rock Park on Lake Buchanan.

If your favorite park is booked, check out Campspot’s regularly updated guide of sites in the path that still have availability. At RVshare, you can book an RV directly from the owner.



BELOW Frederic Allegrini sets up his camera gear at Lost Maples State Natural Area. RIGHT Liam Tarpley uses eclipse-safe sunglasses to watch the annular eclipse.



# Stare Safely

Never look directly at the sun through a camera, binoculars or a telescope without proper solar filters.

Only use glasses made specifically for eclipse viewing; they're about 100,000 times darker than ordinary sunglasses.

View the eclipse indirectly with a pin-hole projector or see what it does to shadows by holding up a colander from your kitchen.

Plan ahead: Folks from all over the U.S. are already booking rooms in the Hill Country, and traffic could be tricky.

If you want a side of music with your eclipse, consider the family-friendly Eclipse Utopia at Four Sisters Ranch in Utopia. Camping is available, and the event includes workshops, disc golf, hiking, biking, yoga and two days of live music. Closer to Bandera, the Ground Zero MusicFest includes everything from live music and a classic car show to a cornhole tournament and space alien costume contest.

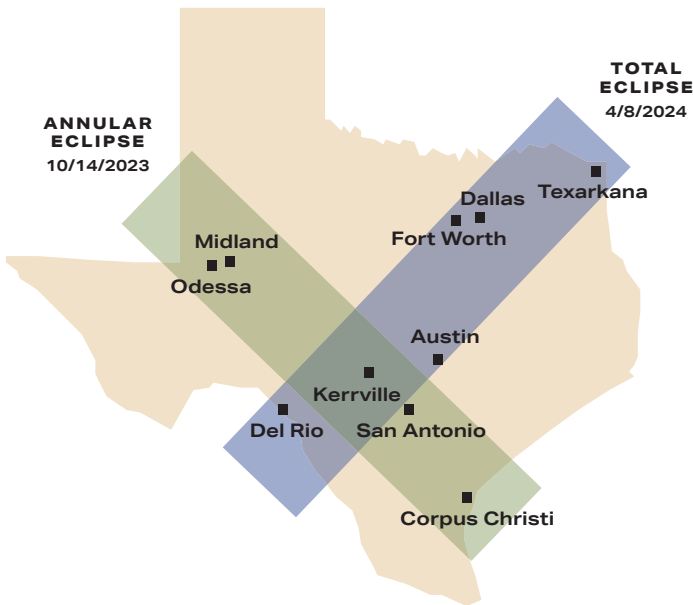
Wherever you go, arrive early, protect your eyes and embrace the experience.

That's what Emma Ransome and Pavol Klacansky, both from Austin, did during the October eclipse. I found them stretched out in the grass at the campground at Lost Maples, listening to a special playlist they had compiled, grinning behind their eclipse glasses.

"We've been able to slowly watch it evolve," Ransome says. "It's very relaxing."

And the opening act only got them more excited about the April main event. ■

**TCP** For more guidance about viewing safety and making your eclipse experience memorable, visit our website. And for a deeper dive into the wonders of the eclipse, check out [nationaleclipse.com](http://nationaleclipse.com).







# T O P D





BY MARGARET BURANEN • PHOTOS BY TOM HUSSEY

## Coaches help canine competitors reach new heights—and grow closer to their humans

**G**rowing up in South Korea while her dad served in the U.S. military, Abby McMillin had two dreams. First, like Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*, she wanted to return home to Kansas.

When her family did finally move back to Kansas, McMillin started working on her other dream: becoming a veterinarian. In high school she started working at a veterinary clinic. There she met a dog that would change her life and her career path.

Taz was a large German shepherd. He was scared and aggressive. Nobody could get near the snarling animal. McMillin decided to try to reach him anyway.

She tossed kibble into his kennel, not even making eye contact with him. She also sometimes sat with her back to the outside of the kennel door. “I just wanted Taz to know that I was there,” McMillin says.

Gradually Taz calmed down and began to trust McMillin. He allowed her to pet him and put a leash on him. Later he accepted affection from other people. Eventually he was adopted by a woman who gave him the loving home he deserved.

The clinic’s veterinarians were amazed at McMillin’s success with Taz. They sent her to work with a professional trainer to learn more about dog behavior.

“He became my mentor,” McMillin says. She realized that communicating with dogs and other animals, trying to figure out what they needed and why they behaved in certain ways, interested her much more than animal health.

Today McMillin is the owner of Triple H Dog Training, where she teaches classes of humans and canines how to work together at her facility in Mineola, northwest of Tyler.

In short, she coaches dog athletes.

Every year, the American Kennel Club and other organizations host thousands of dog sporting events across the U.S. that draw more than 1 million competitors.

But 35 years ago, in 1988, when the United States Dog Agility Association organized the first major sporting competition for dogs—the Grand Prix of Dog Agility World Championships—just 79 competitors from across the U.S. came to Houston for the three-day event. Today, more than 100 events nationwide qualify dogs and their humans—representing more than 20 countries—for regional championships and, ultimately, the world finals.

Abby McMillin guides Apollo, her golden retriever, over an agility training ramp.



**T**he sports encompass a range of competitions for dogs, including agility and herding, racing and jumping, obedience, and tracking and hunting trials. The growth of dog sports has become big business as trainers like McMillin build careers out of teaching people how to compete alongside their pets.

McMillin, a Wood County Electric Cooperative member, lives in Mineola with her husband, Nick; their 2-year-old son, Levi; and seven dogs. One dog, a Great Pyrenees mix, prefers couch lounging to dog sports. The other six, including three golden retrievers, compete.

Border collies, Australian shepherds and Shetland sheepdogs are among the most popular breeds to produce athletes, but there's something out there for just about every dog.

If one canine sport isn't suitable for a dog and its owner, McMillin urges the owner to try something else. Many dogs enjoy agility training, but their owners may realize they aren't fit enough for this fast-paced sport. Rally, which involves only walking, may be a better choice.

Besides, it's "more about relationship building, so the dog owner and dog develop a lifetime friendship," McMillin says. "I want people to enjoy their dogs."





OPPOSITE McMillin with six of her dogs, which learn balance and control on a seesaw at her training facility. RIGHT Apollo goes airborne to catch a flying disc.

For training at home, McMillin advises dog owners to “keep it short. Keep it fun. Keep it simple. Don’t do 30 minutes once a week. Do five minutes every day. For the first week or so, the owner has to get in the habit of training, too. Remember dogs don’t work for nothing. They’re motivated by treats or toys.”

McMillin uses a hand-held clicker to reinforce behaviors. With this method, she has also trained horses and cats, even an otter. Training allows the dog and owner to become a team and have a closer relationship. “It’s not about the ribbons,” she says. “It’s about going home with the best dog ever.”

Another trainer, Debi Krakar, started the Dog Alliance in Cedar Park, outside Austin, in 2006. There she trains therapy dogs and offers classes in various dog sport disciplines.

Krakar, a member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative, says that the raft of dog sports offers an excellent outlet for pups. “When they’ve been mentally stimulated and exercised, they won’t eat your shoes,” she says. “Dog sports build a bond between human and dog. They understand each other better.”

Krakar got into dog training after taking her own dog to schools for children to read to. “Teachers kept calling me,” she says. “The demand for these therapy dogs is constant.”

For owners who aren’t sure which dog sport might be best for them and their pups, she offers a dog sports foundation class that covers the basics. Because when it comes to man’s best friend, it’s really about building relationships.

“Have fun and be positive with your dog,” Krakar says. “In the long run you’ll have a much stronger bond with your dog.” ■



## Games That Aren’t Far-etched

**AGILITY** Dogs run through an obstacle course that includes tunnels, blocks to jump on and vertical poles to weave through.

**BARN HUNT** Popular in rural areas, dogs run into barns and signal where rats are hiding.

**DISC DOG** This is a variation of the basic game of fetch. The dog’s owner throws a flying disc that the dog catches (usually by jumping up in the air) and retrieves quickly.

**DOCK DIVING** Dogs race down a ramp and leap out into a pool of water to retrieve a toy thrown by the owner.

**FAST CAT** No felines are involved! Short for coursing ability test, dogs of any breed are timed as they race around a 100-yard track, chasing an artificial lure.

**LURE COURSING** Sight hounds race around an oval or rectangular course that measures 650–800 yards, chasing an artificial lure.

**RALLY** Dogs walk to various stations and follow various commands from their owners at each one.

**SHED HUNT** Pups retrieve shed deer antlers from a field within a set time period.

**TRACKING** Dogs follow the scent of a lure that was earlier dragged through a course.

**TRICKS** Beyond the basic commands of sit, stay, come and lie down, dogs learn to perform more advanced commands or follow hand signals.

# 1920s Style for a 1920s Price

It was a warm summer afternoon and my wife and I were mingling with the best of them. The occasion was a 1920s-themed party, and everyone was dressed to the nines. Parked on the manse's circular driveway was a beautiful classic convertible. Never ones to miss an opportunity, we climbed into the car's long front seat. Among the many opulent features on display was a series of dashboard dials that accentuated the car's lavish aura. One of those dials inspired our 1920s Retrograde Watch.

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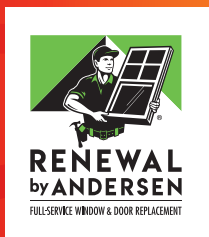
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MESSAGE  
FROM  
GENERAL  
MANAGER

KATHI  
CALVERT

## We Prioritize Safety

**FROM THE CREWS AT** Houston County Electric Cooperative to you, the consumer-members we serve, we recognize that everyone has a part to play in prioritizing safety.

According to Electrical Safety Foundation International, thousands of people in the U.S. are critically injured or electrocuted as a result of electrical fires and accidents in their own homes every year. Many of these accidents are preventable. Electricity is a necessity, and it powers our daily lives. But we know firsthand how dangerous electricity can be because we work with it every day.

To me, it is difficult to emphasize the importance of safety. The word “safe” becomes routine and commonplace until that split second everything changes and an innocent shortcut alters a life forever. Safety requires discipline and following correct steps every time we go to work, whether we have massive outages from a storm or service call to disconnect a meter.

Safety is our No. 1 priority at Houston County EC, but we also want to help keep you and our entire community safe.



That’s why you’ll see us hosting safety demonstrations at community events and in schools throughout the year, demonstrating the dangers of electricity. We discuss emergency scenarios, such as what to do in a car wreck involving a utility pole and downed power lines. We caution students on the dangers of pad-mounted transformers and overloaded circuits.

### I’d like to pass along a few practical safety tips:

- ▶ Frayed wires pose a serious safety hazard. Power cords can become damaged or frayed from age, heavy use or excessive current flow through the wiring. If cords become frayed or cut, replace them before they cause a shock.
- ▶ Label circuit breakers to understand the circuits in your home, and turn the breaker off if you’re doing any electrical work in your home.
- ▶ Avoid overloading circuits. Circuits can only cope with a limited amount of electricity. Overloads happen when you draw more electricity than that—by having too many devices running on one circuit. Contact a qualified electrician if your home is more than 40 years old and you need to install multiple large appliances that consume large amounts of electricity.
- ▶ Use extension cords properly. Never plug an extension cord into another extension cord. If you daisy chain them together, it could lead to overheating, creating a potential fire hazard.

Don’t exceed the wattage of the cord. Doing so also creates a risk of overloading the cord and starting a fire. Extension cords should not be used as permanent solutions. If you need more outlets, contact a licensed electrician to help.

I encourage you to talk with your kids about playing it safe and smart around electricity. Help them be aware of overhead power lines near where they play outdoors.

Never approach a downed line. Remember you cannot see, smell or hear electricity. Electricity seeks a path to ground, and even approaching a downed line could be deadly.

Our top priority is safety for Houston County EC employees and members alike. Contact us for additional electrical safety

tips or if you would like us to provide a safety demonstration at your school or upcoming community event. ■





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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.

### 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:  
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- 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](http://houstoncountyelec.com)



Check us out at  
[TexasCoopPower.com/houston](http://TexasCoopPower.com/houston)

# From Workforce to Golf Course

Houston County EC celebrates the career of Allen Lawrence



**IT IS NOT OFTEN** that one can say they have been with a company for more than half of their life. However, Allen Lawrence started his career with Houston County Electric in September 1985 and spent almost four decades with the co-op. At the time of his retirement, Allen was the longest-tenured employee and had worked his way up the ranks to become a construction crew foreman.

Stacy Freeman, Houston County EC’s chief operating officer of transmission, praised Allen for his dedicated service to the members and communities over the past 40 years, working through all types of weather and outages. Allen began his employment at the cooperative well before the advent of

modern technology, such as iPads and digital maps and meters. In the early days, his time was spent looking through paper maps, without the aid of computers or programs, to locate outage issues.

On behalf of the board of directors, employees and members of Houston County EC, we express our gratitude to Allen for his 39 years of hard work and dedication in providing our membership with the best service possible.

We wish him the best in his retirement! ■







# WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER

## WHEN OUTAGES HAPPEN, WE ALL WANT THE SAME THING: THE POWER TO BE RESTORED.

Access to our lines is crucial when outages arise. Oftentimes, lack of access is what stands in the way of getting power restored to all HCEC members.

As a utility, Houston County EC is considered critical infrastructure with responsibilities and rights to access the distribution.

As a member of the cooperative, we are here to help each other. We take great pride in our response time, and you can help by allowing access to your property.



Even when located on your property, electrical equipment is the property of Houston County Electric Cooperative, and must be accessible to our crews at all times.

### Why?

#### Emergencies

In the event of an emergency, such as a fire, crews must be able to shut power off for firefighters to begin their work. Every second counts during such an urgent event.

#### Maintenance

HCEC routinely inspects the electric distribution system to ensure it is safe and is in good working condition. This includes pole testing, inventory gathering, and right-of-way maintenance.

#### Outages

Some equipment must be accessed in the event of a power outage. If the equipment is inaccessible it can cause longer outages for you and your neighbors.

#### Locked Gate

If your property has a gate that requires a key, HCEC can provide a lock that can be opened by our crews during urgent events. We respect your privacy as a property owner, and will only access our equipment when needed. Gate codes are stored securely for only employees to see.

Inaccessibility is costly to our membership due to delays and multiple trips, and it may threaten the safety of our members and employees.



RISKA / ISTOCK.COM

## Give Electricity a Spring Break

**SPRING BREAK COULD MEAN** time off of work or school and some time away from home. Take advantage of the time away to give your electric bill a bit of a break too.

**While you're gone, unplug some of your household appliances.** Your house has many items that always use electricity when they're plugged in, even if they're off. Unplugging these items not only saves energy but also can prevent fires during your absence. Some of the more common items are TVs, DVD players, cable TV boxes, microwave ovens, toasters and other small kitchen appliances.

**Adjust the refrigerator control to a warmer setting.** The fridge can be set as high as 40 degrees without spoiling food; the freezer can be set at 5 degrees. On these settings, you can conserve up to 40% of the refrigerator's electric usage.

**If you're going on an extended trip, consider emptying the fridge and turning it off entirely.** Remember to leave the door open to prevent mildew. And empty the ice bin so the cubes don't melt and leave a puddle.

**Set the thermostat higher—or lower—than the typical comfort level,** depending on expected temperatures. In warmer weather, you can shut off the air conditioner during your absence. If you have a programmable thermostat, you can program the system to bring your home back to a comfortable temperature before you return.

**Close blinds in sunny windows to prevent rooms from overheating.**

**Turn down the water heater.** A large percentage of the cost of running a water heater comes from just keeping the water at the selected temperature.

**Consider using timers to turn lights on and off every night.** Using timers rather than just leaving lights on all the time can save energy and also give the appearance that someone is home. For the lights that will be on the longest—inside and outside—use LED bulbs. These use at least 75% less power than traditional bulbs and last longer.

On a related note, it's a good idea to turn off the valves of your washing machine to ensure that the laundry room doesn't flood while you're gone. ■

### Mixed Berry Pistachio Crisp

**5 tablespoons cold butter, plus more for coating the dish**  
**4 cups frozen mixed berries**  
**1 tablespoon lemon juice**  
**¼ cup sugar**  
**4 tablespoons flour, divided use**  
**1 cup rolled oats**  
**¼ cup chopped pistachios**  
**⅓ cup brown sugar**  
**¼ teaspoon salt**  
**¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly coat a 9-inch pie dish or oven-safe skillet with butter.
2. In a large bowl, add berries, then sprinkle lemon juice over the top. Combine sugar and 2 tablespoons flour and sprinkle over berries; mix well. Pour into the prepared pan.
3. In a small bowl, combine oats, pistachios, brown sugar, remaining 2 tablespoons flour, salt and cinnamon. Cut in butter using a pastry blender or two forks until large clumps are formed and no dry bits remain. Sprinkle topping evenly over fruit mixture.
4. Bake 45–50 minutes, until browned and bubbly.

**MAKES 8 SERVINGS**

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

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# Buoyed by Vice

When neighborly crime bosses ran Galveston, the city thrived

BY ARIEL SLICK

**ROSARIO AND SAM MACEO** left one island for another when the immigrants arrived in Galveston in 1901 from their home, Sicily, Italy.

In Texas, the brothers became barbers, and when Prohibition went into effect in 1920, they rewarded loyal customers with bottles of wine hidden in bread loaves.

Around this time, Dutch Voight, a member of an organized crime syndicate called the Beach Gang, approached the Maceos with an opportunity to make money by hiding 1,500 cases of liquor from the authorities. With the profit from one case worth as much as 150 haircuts, the brothers accepted.

They were now part of what became known as “the free state of Galveston,” and the Maceos went on to climb the ranks of the underground, running an infamous syndicate of illegal businesses. Galveston earned this moniker during the 1920s because of its lax attitudes toward illegal activities such as gambling, alcohol and prostitution, which fueled its economy well into the 1950s.

It’s easy to imagine the free state as a Hollywood movie: gangsters running the barrier island, vice flourishing, gentlemen patronizing glitzy supper clubs, and politicians and law enforcement colluding with the Maceo brothers and other crime bosses of the era. But that’s not quite how it worked—not in Texas. The free state of Galveston illustrated Texans’ unique worldview.

“I hate to use the term ‘gangsters,’ ” says Jami Durham, a historian with the Galveston Historical Foundation. “It’s not like they were in zoot suits running the streets with guns. They were accepted as respected businessmen who happened to run businesses that were very entertaining.”

Unlike other infamous crime bosses of their era, the Maceos shied away from violence because it was bad for business.

According to Durham, the Maceos also had little tolerance for men who gambled away their rent money. “If a lady came to them and said, ‘I can’t pay my rent because my husband gambled it all away at your casino,’ they would pay her the month’s rent, then pay her husband a call,” Durham says.

The Maceos helped not only their customers but also the greater community. They donated to charity groups and invested in local projects.

“It’s an odd juxtaposition: They were running illegal gambling parlors, but they were contributing to the community,” Durham says. “People loved them and still love them.”

According to Kathleen Maca, a Galveston historian and author, the Maceos and the vice economy of the free state kept Galveston afloat during the 1930s.

“While the rest of the U.S. was suffering from the Great Depression, the city was doing OK,” Maca says. “The free state really saved the island in that aspect. No banks failed.”

But it also didn’t hurt that much of Texas’ commerce still flowed through the city.

“I would counter that it was the port that allowed Galveston to maintain a sense of normalcy,” Durham says. With goods regularly arriving by ship and then being loaded onto rail cars and moved inland, work remained steady, and that helped keep the economy afloat.

During its heyday, an elaborate warning system kept the authorities from raiding the most popular local casino, the Balinese Room, which sat atop a pier that jutted into the bay. The Maceo brothers had opened the casino in 1942.

After numerous failed raids, the Texas Rangers paid off several employees to let them enter the casino unannounced on June 6, 1957. The era of open vice had ended.

Galvestonians still admire the Maceos’ steadfast ambitions.

“It takes a different type of constitution to live here knowing that a storm could take everything you have in a second,” Durham says.

“But the pleasure of living here, smelling the salt air, hearing the waves crash against the seawall and eating fresh seafood—all of that outweighs the threat of the storm,” she says. “Every socioeconomic group, every race, we’re all bound together by a love of this crazy, quirky little sandbar.” ■

Scenes from the Balinese Room in 1948, including Sam Maceo, seated far right.







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# A Revere of Our Own

Young Katy Jennings raced bareback to alert her fellow Texians about the advancing Mexican army

BY MARTHA DEERING • ILLUSTRATION BY KATE GLEYZER

**PAUL REVERE** wasn't the only patriot who made a courageous ride to warn of approaching danger. In 1836, Katy Jennings rode west from her home in Bastrop to the tiny town of Waterloo (known today as Austin) to alert Texians that the Mexican army was coming and they should run for their lives.

Katy was 10 years old.

Her father, Gordon C. Jennings, was a farmer who moved his family from Missouri to Bastrop in 1833. Gordon enlisted in the Texas militia, encouraged by the promise of a land grant as compensation. He served at the Alamo as a cannoneer, probably manning artillery positions on the north wall. When the

Alamo fell to Gen. Antonio López de Santa Anna's army on March 6, 1836, Gordon, 53, was the oldest Alamo defender to die.

Author Mary Jean Kelso, a direct descendent of Katy's brother Samuel—Kelso's great-grandfather—wrote a book about her family, *A Visual History Record of Alamo Defender Gordon Cartwright Jennings' Family*. (Kelso spells her name Katy, but a newspaper obituary called her Katie.)

When word of the Alamo reached Bastrop, most families fled east in a panicked exodus known as the Runaway Scrape. But Gordon's wife, Catherine, and a few of her neighbors stood their ground until

a division of the Mexican army reached the Colorado River at Bastrop.

With no choice but to flee, Catherine, her three children and two stepsons threw their most valuable possessions into a wagon. Then Catherine boosted daughter Katy onto a horse bareback and sent her west to warn others that Mexican soldiers were nipping at their heels. She told Katy not to return to Bastrop because the family would be gone.

Katy was instructed to join another family when she arrived in Waterloo, and the Jennings clan would meet again in a refugee camp along the Trinity River in East Texas.

Clinging to her horse's mane, Kelso writes, Katy rode west at "great speed" for 40 miles, warning settlers along the way. Somehow she found her way back to her family after the Battle of San Jacinto on April 21, 1836, and was with them when they returned to Bastrop.

"According to family stories," Kelso says, "after the Texas Revolution, Katy married Casper Whistler, but the marriage was short lived. Whistler was scalped by Indians while Katy, who had gone to fetch water, hid in a creek bed."

Katy later married a second time, to Sylvester Lockwood, a Texas pioneer. The couple lived near Manor in Travis County for 65 years. According to her 1911 obituary, Katy had eight children, 42 grandchildren, 100 great-grandchildren and 10 great-great grandchildren when she died at the age of 85.

She's still remembered for her famous bareback ride.

"Some people may have called 10-year-old Katy Jennings brave or foolhardy," Kelso says. "Texas calls her a hero." ■



# Best Brunch

Savory or sweet, don't oversleep this weekend meal

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

Nothing makes this gal happier than brunch. Good friends, amazing food and music in the background is my forever Sunday mood. Breakfast tostadas are so easy to prepare, and a mini version of anything is always greeted with a "wow!"

## Mini Breakfast Tostadas

**12 mini or street taco corn tortillas**  
**3 tablespoons olive oil, divided use**  
**6 eggs**  
**4 teaspoons milk**  
**2 teaspoons salt**  
**1 teaspoon ground black pepper**  
**2 cups refried beans, warmed**  
**Pico de gallo or salsa**

- 1.** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place tortillas on a baking sheet and lightly brush tortillas with 2 tablespoons olive oil. Bake until crisp, about 10 minutes.
- 2.** In a bowl, whisk together eggs, milk, salt and pepper.
- 3.** Add remaining 1 tablespoon oil (or you can use 1 tablespoon butter) to a skillet over medium-high heat. Pour in eggs and cook until scrambled. Remove from heat.
- 4.** Spread beans over tostadas, spoon eggs over beans and top with pico de gallo or salsa.

**MAKES 12 TOSTADAS**

**TCP** Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in Cocina Gris at [sweetlifebake.com](http://sweetlifebake.com), where she features a recipe for Honey Flan.







## Sausage in Puff Pastry

PENNY SENGLER  
GVEC

Ready in under 30 minutes, this recipe is hands-down the ultimate addition to your brunch spread, and it might be even better the next morning for a go-to breakfast.

- 1 package frozen puff pastry (17.3 ounces), thawed**
- ¼ cup spicy brown, Dijon or whole grain mustard**
- 1 pound ground breakfast sausage**
- 1 egg, lightly beaten**

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. On a cutting board, unfold the two pastry sheets. Slice pastry into thirds along the folds. Slice each third in half to make 12 rectangles. Spread a thin layer of mustard onto each pastry section.
3. Divide breakfast sausage into 12 small balls, then roll each ball into a finger-size log. Place sausage log onto end of pastry rectangle and roll it up into pastry.
4. Place sausage rolls onto parchment-lined baking sheet. Slice two small slits across the top of each roll. Brush with egg.
5. Bake 20–25 minutes or until golden brown. Allow sausage rolls to rest 7–10 minutes before serving.

MAKES 12

MORE RECIPES >

\$500 WINNER

## Blueberry French Toast With Blueberry Syrup

RUTH FILZ  
NUECES EC



Planning on a crowd for brunch? This heavenly French toast has you covered. No need to individually cook slice after slice—this deliciousness bakes in the oven. It can be assembled the night before and refrigerated overnight so the bread can absorb the flavorful eggy mixture. The lightly sweet, perfectly creamy goodness is worth every calorie.

SERVES 10



- 12 slices day-old bread**
- 1 package cream cheese (8 ounces)**
- 2 cups blueberries, divided use**
- 2 eggs**
- 2 cups milk**
- ½ cup maple syrup or honey**
- 1 cup sugar**
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch**
- 1 cup water**
- 1 tablespoon (½ stick) butter**

1. Coat a 9-by-13-inch pan with nonstick cooking spray. Cut bread into 1-inch cubes and place half of them into pan.
2. Cut cream cheese into ½-inch cubes and place on top of cubed bread. Top with 1 cup blueberries and then remaining half of bread cubes.
3. In a large bowl, beat together eggs, milk, and maple syrup or honey. Pour over bread mixture. Cover and chill in fridge 8 hours or overnight. Remove from fridge 30 minutes before baking.
4. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Bake covered for 30 minutes, then uncover and bake an additional 30 minutes, or until center of French toast is set.
5. In a saucepan combine sugar, cornstarch and water. Bring to a boil, then stir constantly for 3 minutes. Stir in remaining 1 cup blueberries.
6. Reduce heat. Simmer 8–10 minutes, or until berries burst. Remove from heat and stir in butter. Serve warm over blueberry French toast.

## TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

PARTY DRINKS DUE MARCH 10

Summer soirees call for a festive frosty drink. Send us your best punch, mocktail and cocktail recipes for a shot at \$500. Go online and submit your favorite by March 10.





## Breakfast Strata

DIANE HUNLEY  
PEDERNALES EC

A strata is my idea of the perfect brunch. This is prepped the night before so it's ready for the oven the next day.

**1 pound spicy breakfast sausage**  
**½ pound diced bacon**  
**4 eggs**  
**½ teaspoon salt**  
**½ teaspoon ground black pepper**  
**½ teaspoon dry mustard**

**½ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce**  
**2 cups milk**  
**6 slices wheat or white bread, cubed**  
**8 ounces grated cheddar cheese**

1. Coat a 9-by-13-inch pan with nonstick cooking spray.
2. In a skillet over medium-high heat, cook sausage, breaking it up with a spoon until fully done. Remove sausage from skillet, add diced bacon and cook until crispy. Remove from skillet.
3. In a bowl, whisk together eggs, salt, pepper, mustard, Worcestershire sauce and milk.
4. Layer bread, sausage, bacon and cheese in the pan. Pour the egg mixture over the entire casserole. Using a spoon, press down to ensure that all ingredients are submerged. Cover and place in fridge overnight.
5. Remove dish from fridge. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Bake, covered, 1 hour or until firm in center. Allow to cool for 10 minutes before serving.

SERVES 8

## Make Brunch a Breeze

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ

**A small, intimate group** is the way to go. Plan accordingly for your space.

**Make the morning about mingling.** Assemble dishes the night before. Casseroles, quiches, stratas and fruit salads are perfect for this.

**While you're at it**, set the table, arrange glasses, and lay out serving platters and utensils.

**Pick up pastries:** less fuss while supporting local bakeries.

**Offer a DIY bar with self-serve drinks**—coffee, mimosas, mocktails. While guests help themselves, you can finish up preparations or greet guests.

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## 3 ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY

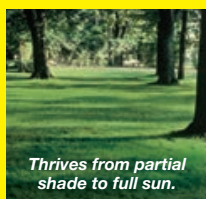
No weeding means no costly chemicals. Amazoy Zoysia lawns naturally resist insects, so you'll save money, while helping to protect the environment. Never expose your family and pets to weed killers and pesticide poison.

## 4 FOR SLOPES, PLAY AREAS, BARE SPOTS AND PARTIAL SHADE

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## 5 IT STAYS GREEN IN SPITE OF HEAT AND DROUGHT

"The hotter it gets, the better it grows!" Amazoy Zoysia thrives in blistering heat, yet it won't winter-kill to 30° below zero. It goes off its green color after hard frosts, and begins regaining its green color as temperatures in the spring are consistently warm.



Thrives from partial  
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Plant it from  
plugs.

## 6 CHOKES OUT CRABGRASS AND WEEDS ALL SUMMER

Your established Zoysia lawn grows so thick, it simply stops crabgrass and most summer weeds from germinating!

## 7 NOW 3 WAYS TO START YOUR AMAZOY ZOYSIA LAWN!

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2) **Precut Super Plugs** come precut into individual 3"x3" plugs ready-to-plant (minimum 1 per 4 sq. ft.). They arrive in easy to handle trays of 15 Super Plugs. Save time and get your new lawn faster!

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1100	+400	10	\$110.00	\$47.50	36%
2000	+1000	20	\$185.00	\$75.00	47%
3000	+1500	30	\$245.00	\$90.00	55%

**Super Plugs** Precut plugs 3 inches by 3 inches READY TO PLANT Packed in trays of 15 Super Plugs. Plant minimum 1 plug per 4 sq. ft.

Super Plugs	Free Plugs	Tray	Your PRICE	+Shipping	SAVINGS
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25	+5	2	\$ 42.50	\$25.00	26%
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COURTESY CHET GARNER

## Doing Time

Brown County's history museum lets visitors lock into law and order

BY CHET GARNER

**ONCE WAS** in Europe and wondered, "Why don't we build more castles in Texas?"

But I was oblivious to the fact that there are already castles all around us in the form of historic courthouses and jails. That's especially true in Brown County, where the old jail looks more like a medieval fortress than a place to dive into history.

I started my time-traveling adventure across the street from the jail at the Brown County Museum of History. From woolly mammoth bones to frontier homes, this collection covers every era of this corner of Texas between Abilene and Austin. I sat around the (fake) campfire inside a full-sized Comanche dwelling. I learned that Gilligan (aka Bob Denver) was raised in Brownwood. I also got hands-on lessons because this museum actually encourages visitors to touch the artifacts.

Most amazing was the story of Camp Bowie, which was one of the largest army training camps in the U.S. during World War II, bringing more than a quarter-million troops to Brownwood.

Things got especially interesting, and spooky, when I crossed the street and stepped inside the old jail. This lockup opened in 1903 and served Brown County until the 1980s. The smell of stone and rusted metal permeates every room. The ground floor, which was once the sheriff's private residence, is now an incredible museum about Texas rule of law and includes stories of famous outlaws and jailbreaks.

Upstairs is where things got even creepier as I explored three floors of metal cells with heavy iron doors. I unknowingly stepped across the drop floor for the old gallows, which luckily didn't spring open. If I was plotting a crime 100 years ago in Brown County, this simple tour would have quickly cured me of any ill intent. ■

ABOVE The old county jail in Brownwood doesn't escape Chet's attention.

**TCP** Join Chet's captivating visit to Brownwood in the video on our website. And see all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



## Know Before You Go

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

## MARCH

### 07

**Austin Lakeway Garden Club Spring Mixer**, (512) 263-2885, lakewaygardenclub.com

**Denton [7-10] Texas Storytelling Festival**, (940) 380-9320, tejasstorytelling.com

**Irving [7-10] Texas Steel Guitar Jamboree**, (817) 558-3481, texassteelguitar.org

### 08

**Corsicana An Evening with Amy Grant**, (903) 874-7792, corsicanapalace.com

### 09

**Luling Rajun' Cajun Throwdown and Gumbo Cookoff**, (830) 875-3214, lulingmainstreet.com

**McKinney [9-10] Heard Museum Family Campout**, (972) 562-5566, heardmuseum.org

### 14

**Dublin [14-16] St. Patrick's Day**, (254) 300-6263, dublintxchamber.com

### 15

**Round Top [15-16] Pioneer Unit of Herb Society of America Plant and Gift Sale**, (713) 503-9981, herbsocietypioneer.org

**Tolar [15-16] Ceramic Expo and Handcrafted Items**, (254) 716-5227, westceramicshow.com

### 22

**Georgetown [22-23] Star Struck: Georgetown Quilt Show**, (512) 869-1812, handcraftsunlimited.com

**Burton [22-30] La Bahia Antique Show**, (979) 289-2684, labahiaantiques.com



23

**Brenham** Mark Lowry with the Sound and Endless Highway, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

**Huntsville** Herb Festival at the Wynne Home, (936) 891-5024, texasthymeunit.org

25

**Johnson City** [25–April 19] Wine and Wildflower Journey, (872) 216-9463, texashillcountrywineries.org

30

**Burnet Hill** Country Lawn & Garden Show, (512) 756-3059, burnetcountyhighland lakesmastergardener.org

**Sabinal** [30–31] Wild Hog Festival and Craft Fair, (830) 486-8549, sabinalwildhogfestival.com

APRIL

02

**Corsicana** [2–4] Janet's Planet, (903) 872-5411, navarrocouncilofhearts.com

05

**Dimmitt** [5–6] Ogallala Quilters' Society Quilt Festival, ogallalaquilters.org

**Luling** [5–6] Roughneck Chili and BBQ Cook-Off, (830) 875-1922, lulingoilmuseum.org

**Kerrville** [5–7] Texas Lions Camp Eclipse Celebration, (830) 896-8500, kerrvilletexasclubb.com

06

**Quitman** [6–8] Northeast Texas Eclipsefest, netxeclipsefest.com

## TCP Submit Your Event

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



Spring break starts  
*here.*

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## Hit the Road

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# Architecture

From modest to magnificent, architecture old and new is used for housing, education, entertainment and more. These structures surround, engage and inspire Texans to even greater heights. This month we appreciate designs found right here in the Lone Star state.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ



**1 SUMMER EVERILL**  
**PEDERNALES EC**

A new installation at the Blanton Museum of Art in Austin.

**2 CAROLYN WILLIAMS**  
**COSERV**

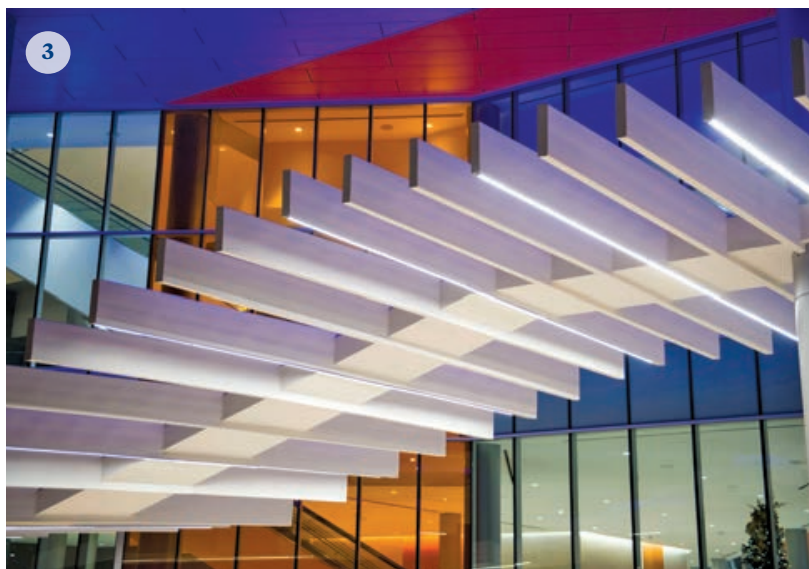
"While exploring senior photo locations, I had heard that this University of North Texas pedestrian bridge was a wonder. As I got up to the edge, the sun and clouds created these amazing shadows."

**3 MARK MCCLENDON**  
**BANDERA EC**

The Henry B. González Convention Center in San Antonio.

**4 TOM BRENTS**  
**FAYETTE EC**

The Ashbel Smith Building, also known as Old Red, is a Romanesque Revival-style structure in Galveston. Built in 1890 with red brick and sandstone, it survived the great 1900 hurricane and 2008's Hurricane Ike.



## Upcoming Contests

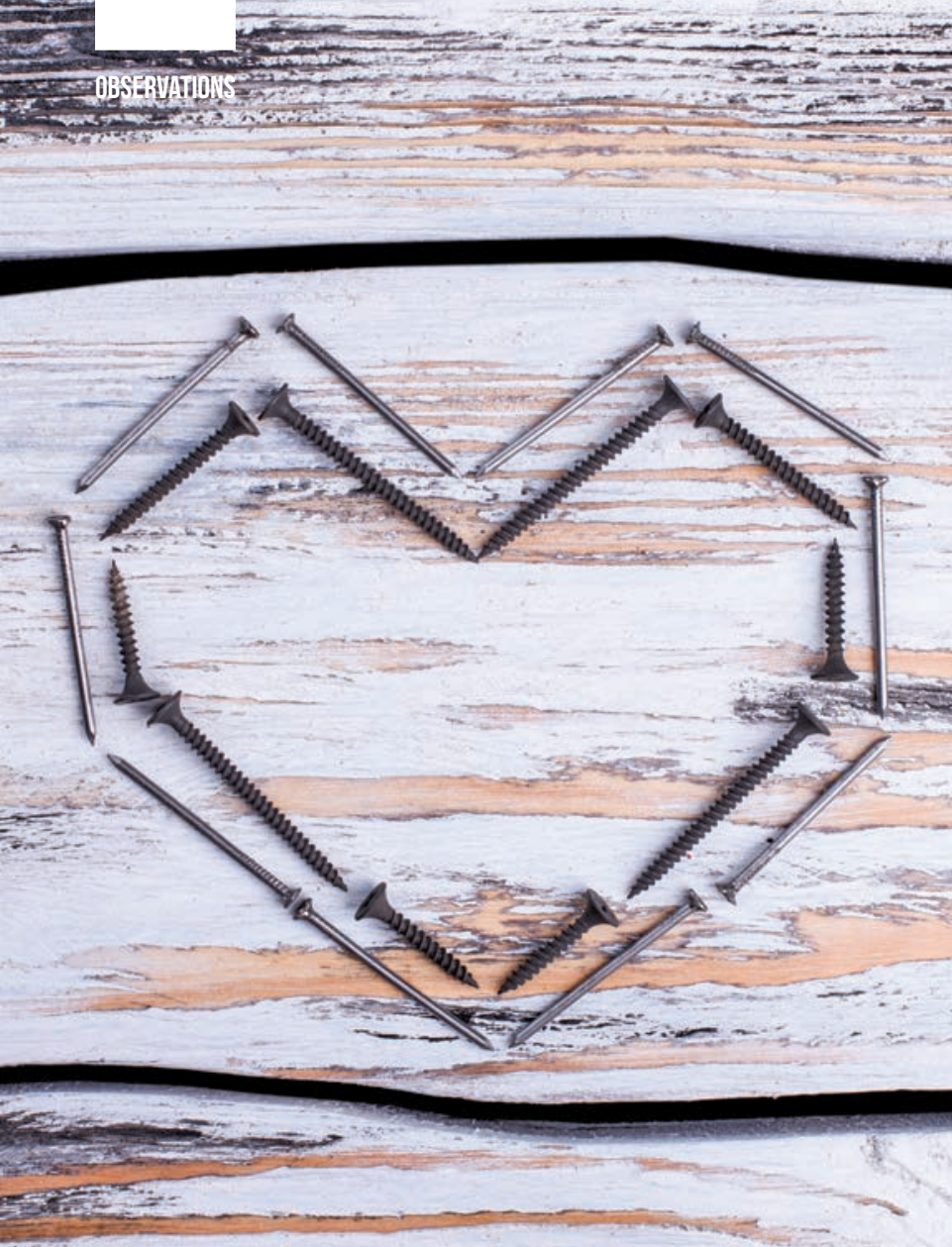
- DUE MAR 10** Shells and Scales
- DUE APR 10** Textures
- DUE MAY 10** Parenthood



Enter online at [TexasCoopPower.com/contests](https://TexasCoopPower.com/contests).

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





## It Takes a Family

When all seems lost,  
loved ones rebuild a life

BY DALE ROBERSON

**SOMETIMES IT TAKES** a tragedy to bring a family and friends together. I know. It happened to me.

My children were scattered to the four winds. Kathy in New Braunfels, Pat and Vicki in Denton; Shannon had settled in Richmond, Virginia. Kalli and Tony were in Little Elm. We weren't estranged, just widely spread.

Since retirement, I hadn't kept up with several friends.

The tragedy occurred in the middle of the night November 18, 2018, when my house outside Driftwood caught fire. I escaped with one night in the hospital. My wife, Joyce, died in the blaze.

Not only did I lose my wife of 41 years, I was left with only the pajamas I had on. I didn't even have shoes.

That was when family and friends re-

grouped to help put my life back together.

Kathy took me to her house to stay until I devised a plan.

Tim McKenzie, whose late father had been a friend, called to offer an unoccupied apartment he owned.

Everyone came together to solve my problems.

As a newspaper editor, I had written about businessman Tracey Dean, then president of the Wimberley school board. When Tracey heard about my misfortune, he appeared with a sizeable check from members of his church. Then he arranged a line of credit for building materials at McCoy's and hired a carpenter to help me rebuild.

My granddaughter, Bethany Kraft, set up a GoFundMe to raise money. Friends I hadn't seen in some time mailed personal checks with condolences.

Granddaughters Melissa Niland and Rachel Nielsen helped set up the apartment as friends contributed furniture and clothing. Tim and grandson-in-law Brian Nielsen cleared cedar and built a pad for a foundation.

We purchased an unfinished 16-by-40-foot building as my future home. With much help and my building skills, we finished the inside to my design. Grandchildren as young as 5-year-old McKinley, 12-year-old Ned and teen Chase contributed. Grandson Cliff Roberson, a professional electrician, provided lights and power. Pat hung a storm door and installed cabinet shelves while Vicki, my daughter-in-law, joined the girls.

My former wife Vicki and her friend Joe nailed down the oak flooring furnished by Tracey from a remodeling job he'd done.

Now—thanks to all their love and efforts—I'm settled and happy in my new home. It's been said that it takes a village. A tragedy can prove what it really takes is family and friends. ■





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