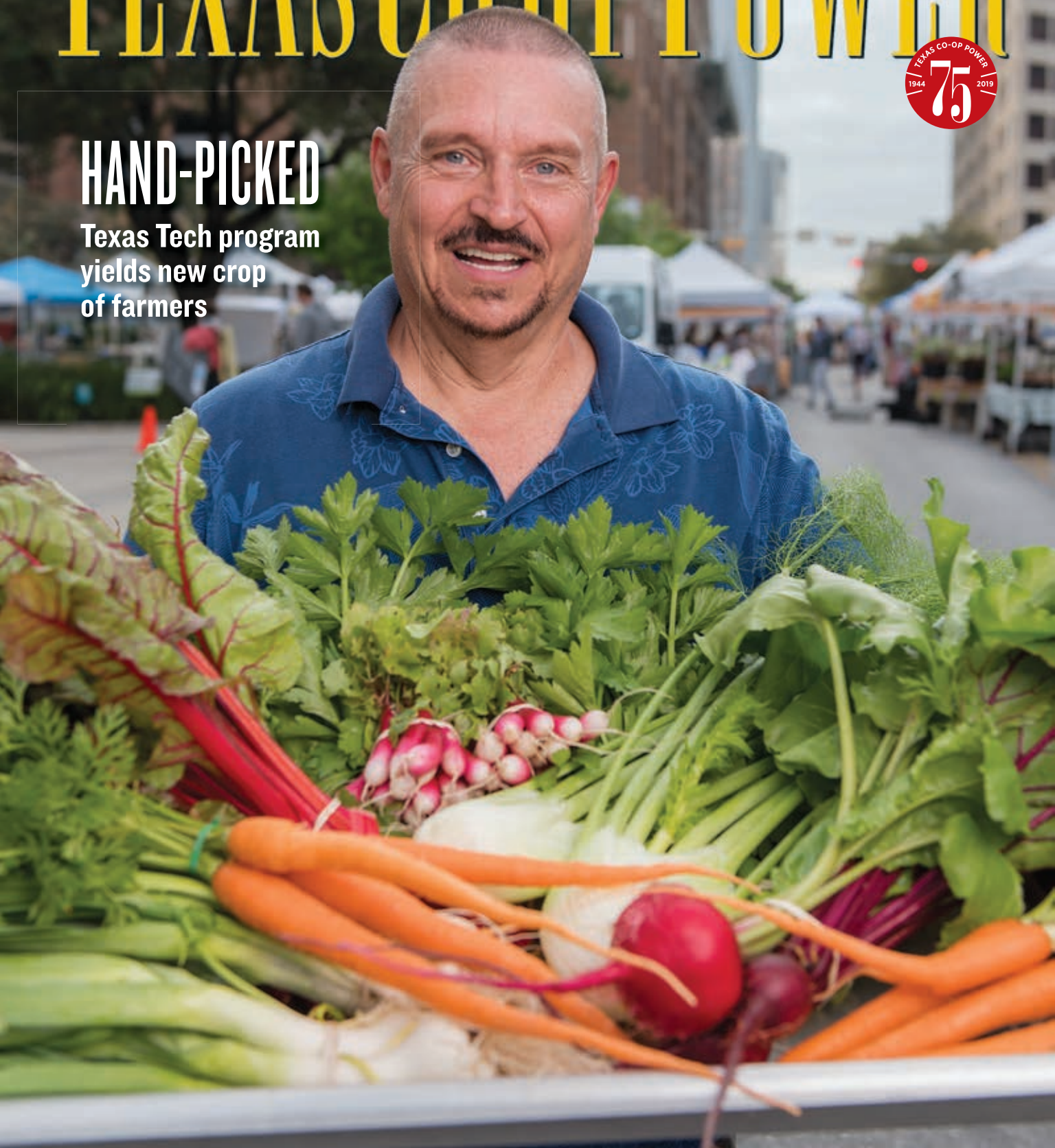


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A class in a Texas Tech vineyard weighs pruned clippings.

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NEXT MONTH

Reliable as Electricity This magazine, a trusted voice for Texas co-ops, turns 75.



STUDENTS: WYATT MCSADDEN. TCP ANNIVERSARY: DAVID VOGIN



ON THE COVER *Richard Ney, owner of Texas Food Ranch in Fredonia, at a farmers market in downtown Austin.* Photo by Wyatt McSpadden

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Pig Rescues

These people are doing a wonderful thing. They spend their time rescuing unwanted piggies and giving them a safe home [*This Little Piggy*, May 2019].
KAREN SUSIE GILCREASE | VIA FACEBOOK

Pot-bellied pigs are often given up or abandoned in the first months of ownership. It's essential to thoroughly research any pet/animal before one gets it and not base it on what's trendy.

SUE LATTERELL-ALLEN | VIA FACEBOOK

Hike to the Desk

On Google Street View, you can take a virtual hike up to the teacher's desk referred to in Chet Garner's *Higher Education* [May 2019], thanks to some kind (young and healthy) soul who carried a 360-degree camera while hiking up to the desk. A pretty view, volcanic rocks, cacti and even some notebooks in the desk drawers are visible. To see the desk, search "30.370752, -103.644667" in Google Maps and drag the Street View icon onto the map.

Pardon me, while I catch my virtual breath after such a strenuous hike.

KEN KONVICKA | GRAHAM UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

Tumbleweed Memory

The article about tumbleweeds [*Russian Interference*, May 2019] brought to mind an incident concerning a dear departed friend, Dana Dickey. In 1984, she picked up a brand-new Buick Riviera convertible in Lubbock and immediately started off to Midland for sales calls. En route, she was unable to

Life With Pet Pigs

I was given my first little pig for my 40th birthday, some 40 years ago [*This Little Piggy*, May 2019]. A friend took me to see the litter, and I chose the runt. He was wild as a deer but gentled down with his first belly rub. After he moved into my barn and my heart, I went on to rescue more.

Over the last 40 years, I have been appalled at the greed surrounding these wonderful creatures and the lies told. I love my pigs and have homes for them, assuming they outlive me, but I know that they aren't suitable pets for everyone.

NANCI FALLEY | LOCKHART | BLUEBONNET EC



avoid a very large tumbleweed.

She stopped the car to check for damage and found the huge plant had torn off the radio antenna and severely scraped the pristine maroon finish of the Buick. She described in vivid detail how she, on the shoulder of the highway, cursed and cried and stomped on the offending tumbleweed until it was a fine powder.

Since that day, when I see a tumbleweed, I think of Dana.

RJ BROSELOW | SOUTHLAND LYNTGAR EC



Wide-Open Secret

Shhhh...don't tell everyone! [*Wide-Open Spaces*, April 2019]
CHERYL COOPER COTTON | VIA FACEBOOK

First-Class Cookies

You published a recipe for Brown Butter Oatmeal Raisin Cookies in September 2018. I tore the page out to try it, but then wadded it up and pitched it due to a sad review/letter. But before the garbage went out, another review came through praising it.

Oh, the indecision. I dug the recipe out and tried it. This is a devastating cookie! No one can get enough of them. They are absolutely first class.

MIKE OTTEN | CEDAR PARK PEDERNALES EC

Dance Hall Days

It was most refreshing to read about the dance halls of my

time—I am 88 [*Hail the Halls*, February 2019]. I used to go to Appelt's Hill Hall, Recreation Hall and Wied Hall in and around Hallettsville. The Bill Mraz Hall in Houston was the best of all. I met my husband during intermission.

RITA CEJKA WACHEL | HALLETTSVILLE

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HAPPENINGS

Celebrate Littlefield

Littlefield's annual festival was developed by its chamber of commerce as a way to celebrate the community's centennial in 2013. The town began as a settlement in 1913, when it had a station on the railroad that became the Panhandle and Santa Fe Railway.

Today, Littlefield, home to Lamb County Electric Cooperative, is in the heart of the largest cotton-producing region in the world, the South Plains of Texas. **CELEBRATE LITTLEFIELD, JULY 19-20**, features live music, a sanctioned barbecue cook-off, parade, and food and merchandise vendors.

INFO ▶ (806) 385-5331

CO-OP PEOPLE

FROM INTERN TO TOP JOB

Alan Lesley grew up in Downing, northeast of Brownwood, in the 1980s, planning to become a peanut farmer like his father. He went to Tarleton State University and studied agricultural business.

Lesley spent his final semester, in the fall of 1997, as an intern in the member services department at Comanche Electric Cooperative.

It changed his life. Comanche hired Lesley, who became general manager in 2009. "I think the internship was a step in the right direction," he says. Words of wisdom for today's interns as we mark National Intern Day on July 25.



◀ LOOKING BACK AT COMMERCE THIS MONTH



SINCE 1944, the year *Texas Co-op Power* debuted, the Texas economy has flourished. Sure, Texas produces oil, but we also are major players in computers, coolers and hair care products.

1940s



1945 Academy Tire Shop in San Antonio changes its name to Academy Super Surplus. Today, Academy Sports and Outdoors has more than 250 stores in 16 states.

1946 Texas-based Tote'm Stores changes its name to 7-Eleven to reflect newly extended hours—7 a.m.-11 p.m. seven days a week.

1950s



1950 A hamburger stand named Whataburger opens in Corpus Christi, the first of what has grown into a chain of more than 800 restaurants.

1951 A 55-acre site in Hurst, near Fort Worth, is selected for Bell Aircraft Corporation's helicopter division, Bell Helicopter.

1954 James Avery starts his jewelry business in a two-car garage in Kerrville. There are now 86 stores in five states.

1960s

1963 Mary Kay Ash, born in Hot Wells, launches her business, now called Mary Kay Cosmetics, in Dallas.



1965 The Astrodome debuts as the first domed stadium ever built.

1965 NorthPark Center in Dallas opens as the largest shopping mall in the country.

Giants in Their Community

DONNA STOTTLEMYER has always had a soft spot for animals. But the longtime Farmers Electric Cooperative employee's goodwill extends to humans, too. Since 2015, she has led the Rockwall/Royse City chapter of Love on a Leash, a nonprofit that brings free pet therapy services to people.

Stottlemeyer coordinates visits to hospice centers and assisted living facilities and, along with other volunteers, deploys the

POWER OF OUR PEOPLE recognizes co-op members who improve their community's quality of life. Nominate someone by emailing people@texascooppower.com.

organization's 16 trained, certified canines to lift moods and soothe souls. One hospice patient who often experienced agitation would calm as soon as the therapy team

entered her room. "She would chat with us, and she had a beautiful smile ... and she would pet the dog," Stottlemeyer said.

Odin, Stottlemeyer's 175-pound Irish wolfhound, has brightened spirits at a children's bereavement program in Rockwall, northeast of Dallas, and encourages a love of books as a reading education assistance dog at local libraries. Odin and other dogs serve as nonjudgmental listeners for children to read to, building their confidence and skills.



Odin listens patiently and accepts hugs with equal aplomb, according to Stottlemeyer, who described him as a "sweet and gentle giant."

Paxdin Rees reads to Odin at the Rockwall County Library.

His handler has a heart for service to match.

INFO ▶ loveonaleash.org

LOOKING BACK AT RURAL LIFE NEXT MONTH ▶

1970s

1972 Half Price Books launches as a secondhand bookshop in an old laundromat in Dallas.

1973 The first Michaels store opens, at Northtown Mall in Dallas.

1973 USAA unveils its new headquarters in San Antonio. The main building is three-fourths of a mile long.

1978 Felix Stehling founds Taco Cabana in San Antonio.



1980s

1980 John Paul DeJoria of Austin and Paul Mitchell launch hair care empire John Paul Mitchell Systems.

1984 As a pre-med freshman at the University of Texas at Austin, Michael Dell starts his computer business, then called PCs Unlimited.

1986 Oil prices plunge by two-thirds, putting 50,000 Texans out of work within a year.



1990s

1997 Bert "Tito" Beveridge of San Antonio creates Tito's Vodka.

1997 Alamo Drafthouse Cinema opens its first theater, in Austin. Twenty-five cities, from New York to San Francisco, now have an Alamo.

1999 The Texas Department of Agriculture begins its Go Texan campaign to promote Texas business and agriculture.



2000s

2001 Texas becomes the top exporting state in the U.S.—a position it has held ever since (\$264.1 billion in 2017).

2006 Yeti is founded in Dripping Springs, west of Austin.

2017 Amazon buys Austin-based Whole Foods for \$13.7 billion.

2018 Apple announces plans to build a new \$1 billion campus in Austin, where it could eventually employ 15,000 people.



NATIVE SOIL



I grew up in Texas, but I've now spent more than half my life away from my home state. When people ask me where I'm from, I don't say New York, where I work, or New Jersey, where I've lived for the past 18 years. I haven't lived in Galveston since 1975, but when asked, that's where I say I'm from: Proudly born on the island—BOI.

But work and life take us places, and journalism moved me to jobs in New York and Washington, D.C. I'm not complaining. These days, I work for *The New York Times*, happily. But I'll never not be a Texan and miss home. I've wanted my own kids to have a sense of belonging to the Lone Star State, from the time of their births onward.

And that's how a bag of dirt became a part of our lives and of the lives of several of our friends.

When my wife, Jeanne, was pregnant with our first child, in 1987, of course we couldn't fly to Texas for the delivery. After

thinking about it, I came up with a plan: Get some dirt from Texas to put under the delivery table.

That might sound crazy—and maybe it is—but it's not new, or unique to Texans. I first heard of it during a study abroad program in Siena, Italy, in the 1970s. The Sieneese have fierce loyalty to their neighborhoods, or *contrada*. Since there was, historically, only one hospital per *contrada*, people from the others would bring some dirt from their own neighborhood into the delivery room for births.

I'd loved that part of Sieneese life, along with the excellent espresso and gelato, and so I started planning for a Texan delivery, *contrada* style. I gathered dirt from various parts of the state, including Galveston. A friend also sent some—he said he chipped a piece off the Alamo, too, but I don't believe him. The resulting mixture fit neatly into a baggie.

When I asked the doctor about bringing it into the hospital,



BY JOHN SCHWARTZ

How a simple bag of Texas dirt connects distant newborns to a beloved land

she was, luckily enough, charmed. She's Italian. She said it would be fine so long as it was in a sterile container and under the delivery table.

Unfortunately, that baby, Elizabeth, was born without the benefit of the dirt because she was delivered in an emergency procedure, and I was stuck in traffic trying to get to the hospital. The dirt was the least of our worries, but it all turned out OK: Elizabeth is 31 now, with a daughter of her own—who was born in Texas! So something must have worked.

Being born over a baggie confers no official status, of course. I was, however, able to get a friendly member of the Texas Senate to pass a resolution that mentioned the dirt and declared Elizabeth “a child of the Lone Star State.” (The resolution did not, alas, declare her eligible for in-state tuition.) And I held on to the bag, which was present for the births of our second and third children, born in 1990 and 1996, in New York and Maryland.

They got resolutions, too. Resolutions are fairly easy to get when your father is the late A.R. “Babe” Schwartz, a former member of the Texas Senate.

That much-traveled bag of dirt has taken on a life of its own. My friends Jay and Alice had their first child at St. Vincent's hospital in New York City. Jay, born in El Paso, called the night of the delivery and asked if I could bring it to him. I raced downtown. He stepped out of the delivery room to meet me in a hospital hallway. I tossed the bag. He snapped it out of the air and ran back to the delivery room.

St. Vincent's is gone now. Jay and Alice are back in Texas, and their daughter, Lily, is going strong.

The bag of dirt has also been pressed into service within the newsroom of *The New York Times*. Last October, *Times* metro reporter Emma Fitzsimmons borrowed the bag for the birth of her first child, Hudson. Her dad wrapped the bag in a little Texas flag and, she tells me, “touched the flag to his cute little baby toes within a few hours of his birth so that he would step foot on Texas soil before any other.” More recently, the dirt made its way into the hospital room of *Times* business reporter Amy Chozick, a San Antonio rose, to help Texanize the birth of Cormac Aidan Ennis.

I held on to the Texas flag wrapper that Emma's dad provided, so the dirt looks classier now. After all, there are worse ways to start out in life than with this slightly silly but meaningful ritual.

John Schwartz is a science writer for *The New York Times*.



BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS | PHOTOS BY WYATT MCSPADDEN



Eric Hequet grew up eating fresh-picked tomatoes bought at farmers markets near his home in Paris, France. To this day, he can still taste their juicy goodness, topped with a drizzle of olive oil and a dab of salt. Fast forward to where he lives now, and shopping for vegetables at big-box grocers makes him grimace.

“Many tomatoes today don’t have a true tomato flavor,” says Hequet, chairman of the plant and soil science department at Texas Tech University in Lubbock. “They’re round and red like tomatoes, but they’re tasteless because they’ve been bred to be hamburger-



TEXAS TECH PROGRAM PUTS STUDENTS ON A PATH TO FARM-TO-TABLE CAREERS

friendly. That means they have a long shelf life and very little juice so they won’t get a bun wet. Unfortunately, fruits and vegetables with little to no taste are common in the marketplace.”

To change that, Hequet, an award-winning researcher in cotton genetics, led efforts to establish a new undergraduate degree specialization at Texas Tech for 2018. The new program allows students to focus on local food and wine production systems.

Texas Tech University’s local food and wine production program reflects increasing demand for regionally grown foods produced sustainably by small-scale farms.

This study concentration, the first of its kind in Texas,

will prepare students for farm-to-table careers, such as an urban farmer, orchard manager, crop consultant, winery cellar master, or fruit and vegetable marketing specialist.

Such forward thinking has kept Texas Tech at the cutting edge of ag education. In 2010, motivated by the rapidly growing wine industry in Texas, the university established the state’s first viticulture and enology degree program. The new local food and wine production program is a response to an increasing demand for fruits, vegetables and other edibles produced by small farms using earth-friendly practices. According to one report published by Packaged Facts, a source of market research for the food industry, local foods generated \$11.7 billion in sales in 2014 and are predicted to reach \$20.2 billion this year.

What makes a food “local”? It depends on whom you ask. “Locavores,” a term coined in 2005, encourage people to eat food



The business of local production IS NOT JUST ABOUT GROWING CROPS BUT WORKING WITH WINERIES AND RESTAURANTS TO ENHANCE THEIR CUSTOMERS' EXPERIENCE WITH THE BEST LOCAL PRODUCTS.

grown within 100 miles of home. But under the 2008 Farm Act, a product may be considered local if it's shipped within the same state or less than 400 miles from its origin. Consumers want more.

But given food producers' thinning ranks, who will produce that local food? In the U.S., more than 31% of farm operators were 65 or older in 2012, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Texas Tech University officials hope that an ag degree with a focus on small-scale farming will entice more young people into the field.

"Cotton production is very important around Lubbock," explains Hequet, who researched cotton fiber technology in Africa and France before joining Texas Tech in 1997. "However, a young person lacking an ag background or family in the business can't spend millions of dollars to get started in growing cotton. It's impossible.

"However," he adds, "they could buy a few acres and grow high-quality vegetables for sale to restaurants and high-end stores in the city."

Hequet stresses the importance of introducing city kids—not just the sons and daughters of row-crop producers—to agriculture. He suggests that growing fruits and vegetables to feed local markets is more appealing and more marketable, because of the growing urban agriculture trend.

HILL COUNTRY CAMPUS

The local food and wine production program, which kicked off in fall 2018, enrolls students both in Lubbock and at Hill Country University Center in Fredericksburg. Texas Tech partners with several Central Texas colleges so students can seamlessly transfer credits. Ed Hellman, a viticulture and enology professor at Texas Tech since 2000 and member of Central Texas Electric Cooperative, moved from Lubbock to Fredericksburg to oversee the program, which could expand to encompass animal products.

"Our program is unique in that we include wine because it is such an important component of the farm-to-table movement," Hellman says. "The local wine and food connection is really strong, especially here in the Hill Country. Human connection is another driving force. It's reassuring to people to know that their food was grown or made with care by someone local they can talk to."

Under Tech's new program, coursework focuses on the sustainable production of fruits and vegetables and introduces students to wine science, grape growing, wine marketing and hospitality management.

"The business of local production is not just about growing crops but working with wineries and restau-

Dabs and John Hollimon, who own 1851 Vineyards near Fredericksburg, earned viticulture and winemaking certificates through Texas Tech.



Above: Instructor Kirk Williams shows how to make a final pruning cut at a Texas Tech vineyard. Right and below: Richard Ney, front, and Alik Hovhannissyan of Texas Food Ranch near Fredonia sell their produce 100 miles away, at the Sustainable Food Center's farmers market in downtown Austin.



program teaches students, and Ney underscores the importance of the small producer. "People want to know their farmer," Ney says, "so they know the vegetables are not pumped full of chemicals."

MOVE OVER, PEACHES

Two decades ago, tourists flocked to Fredericksburg for peaches, not wine. Back then, only four wineries and one wine tour company operated in the area. Today, Hill Country wine tourism is booming, and the area around Fredericksburg includes more than 50 wineries and 18 tour companies.

rants to enhance their customers' experience with the best local products," Hellman notes. He explains that the program emphasizes sustainable practices, which use products and methods that are considered to be safer for the environment but still economically feasible.

Nelson Avila, a Lufkin native who completed most of his general education classes at Austin Community College, chose to specialize in Tech's program. At 43, he's working toward earning a Bachelor of Science degree because he wants to make a difference.

"We're running out of land because it's being developed or overtilled," says Avila, who paints houses in Austin to help pay his family's bills. "The world is growing, and people need to eat. I want to grow sustainable crops on a small farm and teach my kids how to care for the land."

Central Texas EC member Richard Ney and his partner grow a selection of vegetables, fruits and berries on the Texas Food Ranch, their property near Fredonia, 100 miles west of Austin. They practice what the Texas Tech



“Peaches are still important, and they still are a driver in the local farming and agritourism industry, but vineyards and wineries are now leading through sheer numbers,” says Jim Kamas, associate professor and extension specialist with Texas A&M AgriLife in Fredericksburg. “With that, peach grower demographics are changing. They’re getting older, and they’re wanting to grow fruit crops on a smaller scale that emphasize quality over quantity.”

Toward that goal, Kamas, a member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative, evaluates pears, figs, raspberries, blackberries and pomegranates at the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Viticulture and Fruit Lab near Gillespie County Airport. He also helps small producers identify varieties of specialty fruit crops uniquely suited for their local markets.

ALTERNATE SCHOOLING

Food producers and people wanting a career change can get a boost from professional certificate programs earned through Texas Tech. The two-year viticulture certificate program, which started in 2008, has graduated 177 students, many of whom have started their own vineyards and wineries. Since 2014, the two-year Texas winemaking certificate program has awarded 53 professional certificates.

In the near future, the school plans to offer a small-scale farming course on sustainably producing fruits and vegetables for local markets. All certificate programs are a mixture of online classes and hands-on sessions in Fredericksburg and Lubbock. For example, viticulture students plant and propagate grapevines at the on-site vineyard at the

WEB EXTRAS

▶ Read this story on our website for more about the small producer program and farmers markets.

Hill Country University Center.

“For doctors, lawyers, engineers and other people who don’t want to go back to college, our continuing ed programs allow them to get up to speed,” Hellman says. “Many of our students want to work at a winery, but they don’t want a college education. This is a way for them to get an education without the full commitment and cost.”

Dabs and John Hollimon, who own 1851 Vineyards, south of Fredericksburg, respectively earned a winemaking and viticulture certificate. With help from their grown children, they resurrected a vineyard that Dabs inherited. In 2013, they planted 600 grapevines followed by 5,000 more the next year. Five years later, their medium-sized winery has an annual capacity of 10,000 cases of bottled wine.

“Our 2016 Estate Tannat was a double gold winner in the 2019 San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition,” says Dabs, a retired schoolteacher and member of Central Texas EC. “That’s a lot of validation for what we’re doing with our grapes and winemaking. We couldn’t make the quality wines that we do if we hadn’t taken the Texas Tech courses.”

Their 1851 Vineyards label is among more than 25 Texas wine-makers carried at the Cabernet Grill in Fredericksburg. Since 2006, chef Ross Burtwell has offered a Texas-only wine list, which he combines with locally sourced ingredients to create what he calls his Texas Hill Country cuisine.

“As they say, what grows together goes together,” says Burtwell, a member of Central Texas EC. “It’s fantastic what Texas Tech is doing. We’re facing a labor shortage, and to be able to hire passionate people who are knowledgeable about local food production will be great for our industry.”

Sheryl Smith-Rodgers, a member of Pedernales EC, lives in Blanco.

Fennel and beets for sale at the Sustainable Food Center’s farmers market in downtown Austin.



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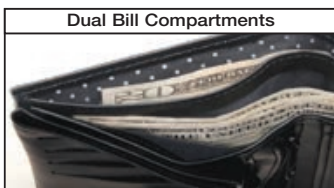
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Cooperatives Take Cue From Declaration of Independence



MESSAGE FROM
GENERAL MANAGER ALAN LESLEY

WHEN BENJAMIN FRANKLIN SIGNED THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, he is credited with saying, “We must, indeed, all hang together, or most assuredly we shall all hang separately.” That recognition of the need to work together may also be why, in 1752, Franklin founded the first successful cooperative in what would become the United States, the Philadelphia Contributionship for the Insurance of Houses From Loss by Fire, which still operates today.

The principles that underlie the Declaration of Independence and form the basis of American democracy find a counterpart in cooperatives. Cooperatives are owned and democratically controlled by the people who use their services. Each member has one vote regardless of his or her stake; that is, no member can buy more control than another member. This principle stands in stark contrast to investor-owned businesses, in which only shareholders have a vote in how the business is run, and even among shareholders, some have more votes than others depending on how many shares they own.

The Declaration of Independence declared the equality of rights of American citizens and that people had the right to organize to secure their futures when their rights were infringed upon. At the time the declaration was written, democracy was a fairly untested idea—but the founders of our country were determined to make it work.

The concept of popular sovereignty, the idea that the government exists to serve the people who elect representatives to express their will, is also found in cooperative principles. Cooperatives exist to serve their members and are governed by

boards of directors composed of co-op members.

So when you celebrate with family and friends this year the many liberties and rights we enjoy, think about those principles that inspired our Founding Fathers. They also inspired the pioneers who established electric cooperatives—folks who were determined to provide safe, reliable and affordable power to secure the futures of rural communities.



Comanche Electric Cooperative has always operated under the principles of democracy, and we are dedicated to fulfilling that promise as we serve our members today and in the future. Happy Independence Day!

DOES YOUR COMMUNITY HAVE A STORY?

EVERY COMMUNITY, no matter how big or how small, has a story to tell. What is your community's story? Who are its people? What do they do? What is your history? We want to hear your story!

Email sdukes@ceca.coop with a brief description of your community and its people, along with a contact number for a follow-up call. Your community could be featured in *Texas Co-op Power*!

Let us hear from you!



HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY

Thursday, July 4



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1–2 p.m.

Eastland Office: Tuesday and
Thursday, 8 a.m.–4 p.m.

General Manager

Alan Lesley

Board of Directors

Randy Denning, District 1
Pete McDougal, District 2
Ruby Solomon, District 3
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CECA Moves to a New Home



**349 Industrial Blvd.
Comanche 76442**

When a small group of rural citizens met in 1938 to discuss the lack of infrastructure in Comanche County, little did they know that, 80 years later, it would grow into a seven-county electric cooperative serving almost 17,000 meters on 5,000 miles of electric lines. Except for its first few years, Comanche Electric Cooperative has occupied and operated out of the same headquarters. “We finally just got to the point where there’s not any more floor space,” said Alan Lesley, CECA general manager. “Not a bad problem to have, but a challenge nonetheless.”

Why Build a New Headquarters?

CECA’s previous headquarters was built in 1955, when the co-op had half as many members, miles of line and employees as it does today. The cooperative outgrew that building. Our office was filled to capacity, with employees sharing workstations and offices. To ensure we exceed our members’ expectations, we must provide our employees with adequate work areas.

What Options Were Available?

To remedy this situation, the board and staff of CECA began an extensive study of options in 2014. They reviewed three options:

1. Renovation of the existing location was the most desired option but was quickly eliminated. With little room available for expansion and a 62-year-old building, this option was not economically feasible to meet the organization’s current and



CECA's new headquarters facility was started, and finally, in January 2018, construction began.

Will Rates Be Raised To Pay for the New Facility?

On CECA's financial statements, this project isn't treated any differently than that of a large power line construction project. Keeping almost 5,000 miles of electric lines in good working condition is a constant work in progress, so additions and modifications to the utility plant are a necessity and budgeted for every year. This project has been well-planned, and all costs have been accounted for within the budget. Of course, costs can increase over time, and rates for CECA members must be adjusted to recover those costs. However, this specific project will not affect the rates CECA members pay any more than other projects of this scale within the scope of CECA's work plan.

The Result

Today, we are pleased to occupy our new space at 349 Industrial Blvd. in Comanche. A drive-thru payment window and night deposit area have been added for our members' convenience. Additional parking areas make the office more accessible than the previous small parking lot.

Energy efficiency measures have been taken, a much-needed improvement over the previous building. These measures

expected future needs.

2. Start with a blank slate and build from the ground up.
3. Renovate another existing building.

In the search to determine if it was feasible to purchase raw land for a new headquarters site, the Sidran manufacturing plant was considered and ultimately determined to be the best overall fit for CECA. The 42,000-square-foot building provided adequate space for offices, with substantial room for growth. The 15-acre property also accommodated a shop, equipment yard, warehouse and additional room for a solar farm.

Who Made the Decision To Renovate?

In January 2015, the CECA Board of Directors voted to purchase and renovate the former Sidran plant and the 15 acres it sits on. With ample infrastructure to build from and room for growth, this decision proved to be not only the most practical option for the cooperative but also the best use of available resources.

In May 2016, the board reviewed candidates for the project's general contractor and selected Waldrop Construction of Brownwood. From there, engineering and design work for

ensure the new building is well-equipped to last into the future and leaves only a small footprint on the environment. Landscaping has been designed to allow for water runoff and to eliminate waste of this precious resource.

Looking to the Future

Plans are being made to install a community solar farm at the new location. In addition to serving as an added generating facility, the array will also serve as a tool to educate our members and the communities we serve about the technology, its costs and the time frame in which they can expect to recover their investment if they decide to install a system at their home or business.

In addition, the new facility is located on Industrial Boulevard, an area zoned for industry with better entry and exit routes than the previous facility. CECA traffic will now be directed away from the more residential area of Wrights Avenue.

We invite you to stop by the new headquarters for a visit. Our office hours remain 7:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m., and our phone number is still 1-800-915-2533. We look forward to your visit!

CECA Awards \$14,000 to Area Students

Comanche Electric Cooperative recently awarded \$14,000 in scholarships to area students. Kenna Hall, Thomas Kinnin, Colton Piri, Hailee Rae Stacy and Hannah Stuart each received a \$2,000 scholar-

ship for excellence funded by unclaimed capital credits funds. Jennifer Anaya and Kaitlyn Glass were awarded \$2,000 scholarships funded by Operation Round-Up. Congratulations to all the recipients.



KENNA HALL is a senior at Comanche High School and the daughter of Wade and Betty Hall. She will attend Hardin-Simmons University, where she will study social work.



THOMAS KINNIN is a senior at Early High School and the son of Wade and Paula Kinnin. He will attend the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, where he will major in Christian studies and mass media communications.



COLTON PIRI is a student at Angelo State University, where he is majoring in biology. He is from Blanket and is the son of Andrew and Laura Piri.



HAILEE RAE STACY is a senior at Eastland High School and the daughter of Bradlee and Kalli Stacy. She will attend Texas Tech University, where she will major in prelaw.



HANNAH STUART currently attends Howard Payne University, where she is majoring in kinesiology. She is from Cisco and is the daughter of Darrell and Mary Ann Stuart.



JENNIFER ANAYA is a senior at Comanche High School and the daughter of Filiberto Anaya. She will attend Angelo State University, where she will major in biology.



KAITLYN GLASS is a senior at Priddy High School and the daughter of G.W. and Lori Glass. She will attend Tarleton State University, where she will major in animal science.



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Recognizing a Tradition of Service

YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED SOMETHING NEW RECENTLY IN TEXAS CO-OP POWER: POWER OF

Our People, a series of recurring short profiles that highlight community helpers in Co-op Country. This initiative, found in the Currents section of the magazine, seeks to recognize and honor electric cooperative members who uphold cooperatives' rich legacy of volunteerism through selfless acts and thoughtful dedication to various causes.

Their commitment to serving others reflects an ethos that we at Comanche Electric Cooperative strive to emulate—helping others to strengthen our community as a whole and as a worthy objective unto itself.

Whether through ongoing efforts such as Operation Round-Up or participation in food drives and Relay For Life, our goal is to give back to the community at least a fraction of what we've received from it. So it's doubly gratifying to read about all the good things members of this cooperative and others are doing. We delight in their stories, and their sterling examples inspire us to do more here in our own backyards.

You can find this month's honoree on Page 7. If you know of a fellow co-op member—and we bet you do—whose humanitarian acts deserve a bit of spotlight, please let us know about them. The ideals of altruism and service run deep in co-op territory and co-op history, and we want to showcase their ambassadors' good works every chance we get.

Send your nominees for Power of Our People to people@texascooppower.com. Whatever your nominee's cause, we look forward to sharing his or her story and inspiring readers to pay it forward in their own ways.



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WHY MY CO-OP MATTERS

When the lights go out, it's good to know my co-op won't leave me in the dark.

After a big storm rolls through, CECA works hard to restore power and also keep members like me up to date with important information—outage times and tips that keep my family safe.

From the people working on the lines to the folks answering the phones, I know I can count on CECA.

My co-op's dedication matters to me.



www.cecacoop.com

Hands On

Explore the world in new ways at Johnson City's Science Mill

BY JOEY HELD

SOON AFTER YOU ARRIVE AT THE SCIENCE Mill in Johnson City, west of Austin, you're greeted by a wave. It isn't a friendly staff member saying hello, though you'll encounter that, too. Instead, it's a 30-foot robotic hand made from more than 500 stainless steel triangles. The hand is plenty impressive on its own, but using a remote joystick that mimics the hand, visitors can move the fingers however they'd like, from a peace sign to a "hook 'em Horns" position.

The Colossal Robotic Hand is one of more than 50 exhibits at the Science Mill, which celebrated its fourth anniversary in February. Upon entering, guests can create an avatar using a QR code. That code can be scanned at exhibits to collect badges, the digital equivalent of stamps in a passport.

Unlike most museums, touching and interacting with the displays is encouraged at the Science Mill. From building a motorized race car to playing with an enormous Rube Goldberg contraption, students participate in science, technology, engineering and mathematics activities.

"We want to create that bridge for students, to give them a bigger perspective than just sitting in their class and not being all that excited about what they're learning," says Bonnie Baskin, founder and board chair for the attraction. "Most of the exhibits are unique to the Science Mill."

Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of the Science Mill is the building itself. James Polk Johnson—grandfather of President Lyndon B. Johnson's cousin—founded a steam and grist mill on the site in 1884. In 1930, George Crofts purchased the mill and converted it to produce

agricultural feed.

Since that business closed in 1979, the mill had a variety of uses before Baskin and her team bought it in 2012. A two-and-a-half-year reclamation project resulted in a sterling example of adaptive reuse, transforming a site of industrial agriculture production into an environment designed to inspire the next generation of science leaders.

The history isn't lost on visitors, either.

"I really like reclaimed spaces," says Alex Shebar, visiting from Austin. "I'd rather keep history alive in some sort of interesting way, especially if it creates knowledge."

This year's anniversary celebration brought an addition: a 1,000-square-foot aquaponic greenhouse. The working ecosystem demonstrates how fish, plants and microbes work together to create healthy food. Students can play greenhouse bingo as they explore every crevice of the greenhouse.

"We want kids to have that 'aha!' moment where they say, 'That's how this works!'" says Bob Elde, the facility's science director and vice chair of the board. "That's a big reason why we're doing this."

"It's great," says 5-year-old Townes Walski Pincoffs, showing off her completed bingo card. "I like everything. And I saw a snail!"

The Science Mill's focus on adaptive reuse is one reason it has received support from Pedernales Electric Cooperative. The co-op has contributed to exhibits and awarded the organization one of its community grants.



Students play greenhouse bingo in the aquaponics greenhouse. Inset: The 30-foot robotic hand.

“We’re helping make dynamic exhibits possible,” says Caroline Porter, PEC community relations coordinator. “The Science Mill brings opportunities to kids all over Central Texas, which really aligns with our values as a co-op.”

Ethan Cook, a freshman at Round Rock High School, thinks the multitude of exhibits helps the Science Mill stand out.

“This one has it all. It’s got biology, engineering, arts—it’s a great variety,” he says.

“The kids can play with everything,” adds Raffaella Ricco, a San Antonio resident with children ages 8, 4 and 1. “It’s not like a typical indoor playground. It’s more focused on technology and learning. The kids are really enjoying it, and I’m enjoying it, too.”



Ricco’s 8-year-old son, Rafael, agrees, giving a big thumbs-up while working on programming a robotic armadillo to move around and make sounds. “I like the technology!” he says. “There are a lot of buttons.”

Since opening in 2015, the Science Mill has hosted more than 157,000 visitors, including 42,000 field trip students—35% of which attend on scholarship. About half the students are from the Hill Country and other rural areas, and about a quarter each are from Austin and San Antonio.

The Science Mill has also hosted 48 STEM career immersion summer camps around South and Central Texas with 1,065 campers—80% of whom attend tuition-free, courtesy of scholarships. When they leave, campers feel more excited about pursuing science, technology, engineering or math careers.

“The mill brings in kids that don’t have access to this kind of experience,” says Anne Hebert, marketing specialist at the Science Mill. “It’s often their first time being hands-on and really getting their wheels spinning.”

What started as a labor of love has grown into a neighborhood gem that brings out curiosity in kids and adults.

“I’ll hear neighbors talking, and they’ll refer to us as ‘our science mill,’” Baskin says. “We’ve been accepted, and people are proud to have us here.”

Writer **Joey Held** has not collected every badge with his Science Mill avatar, but he did make music out of bananas.



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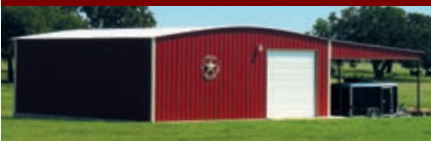
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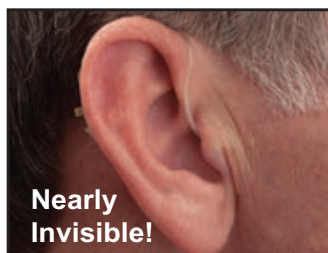
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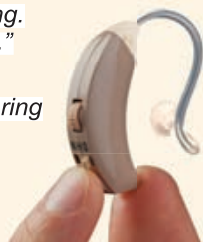
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Geronimo in San Antonio

After his final capture by the U.S. Army, the Apache leader was detained at a military post

BY CYNDY IRVINE

MIDDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1886, A SPECIAL train from Fort Bowie, Arizona, arrived at San Antonio's Sunset Depot. On board, under heavy guard, were prominent Apache leader Geronimo and 33 fellow Native Americans, en route to Florida as prisoners of the United States government.

Geronimo was a Chiricahua Apache who fought settlers and soldiers throughout the tribe's homeland in what is now Arizona and New Mexico. He was a spiritual leader and formidable warrior who led the fight against settlers' incursions into Apache lands. He had an uncanny ability to evade capture and frequently retreated into Mexico before reappearing to continue his battle.

After multiple surrenders and subsequent escapes, Geronimo and a small band of his followers, outnumbered and weary, surrendered for the last time to U.S. Army personnel September 4, 1886.

When these captives arrived in San Antonio, they were taken to the military post at Government Hill, part of present-day Fort Sam Houston, a few miles northeast of downtown. Here they were confined to the 8 acres within the limestone-walled supply depot known as the Quadrangle.

Newspaper coverage of the spectacle reflected the jingoist attitudes of the time and included this headline in the September 11 *San Antonio Daily Express*: "Arrival of Geronimo, Nachez, squaws and papooses—the meanest nest of cut-throats in America." That very evening, soldiers guarded against an unruly crowd "that peered and surged and ... kicked around the entrance to the government build-



ings," according to the paper.

"After the Civil War, federal officials forced unrelated Apache bands to live on reservations in bleak, desolate places," says Catharine Franklin, assistant professor of history at Texas Tech University. "Geronimo and his followers faced dire poverty, isolation, hunger and illness. It's no wonder they fought outsiders whom they viewed as their enemies."

Local reporters sensationalized the captives. The *Daily Express* described Geronimo as 50 years old, of medium height, with long black hair. His face was "seamed and furrowed" and his legs "bowed by their long grip on the saddle," the paper reported.

"The residents of San Antonio didn't know, and seldom cared, about the difficult choices faced by indigenous people," Franklin says.

The prisoners were detained in the Quadrangle for six weeks while the government decided whether they were to be maintained as prisoners of war or returned to civil authorities in Arizona anxious to try them. During this time, local newspapers criticized the military officers for their

leniency with the captured Apache.

The prisoners were housed in tents pitched on the lawns of the Quadrangle campus. The *San Antonio Daily Light* reported that they were fed "with all the luxuries of the season, fresh fruit included." They passed time playing cards and were allowed visitors. Geronimo was driven on at least one carriage ride and "shown the city and its surroundings." The women were granted a shopping excursion to "a store on the Plaza in San Antonio... [where they] bought all the red calico in the shop" and posed for photographs in front of the building.

On October 22, the captives were sent to join their fellow Chiricahuas in Florida. Geronimo and his warriors were detained at Fort Pickens, and the women and children were sent farther east to Fort Marion. Large numbers of Chiricahua died in Florida from disease and the tropical humidity. The survivors were eventually relocated to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, where Geronimo died in 1909 from pneumonia after a horse-riding accident. He is buried in the Apache cemetery there, never having been allowed to return to his homeland.

Cyndy Irvine lives in San Antonio.



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Gulf Shrimp

THE HEART OF SUMMER IS PEAK season for two of my favorite pastimes: grilling and eating shrimp from the Gulf. This recipe for Grilled Shrimp With Herb and Wine Butter first appeared in *Texas Co-op Power* in June 1988, but its appeal is timeless. It's easy enough to prepare at a beach house and makes for the perfect light summer meal—especially when paired with a pile of angel hair pasta, crackly bread or warm steamed rice. To deepen the smoky nuance, use juice from lightly charred lemons in the butter sauce. The original recipe suggests skewering the shrimp or cooking them in a grill basket. I prefer to fire the shrimp in a preheated paella pan to retain all the buttery juices.

PAULA DISBROWE, FOOD EDITOR

Grilled Shrimp With Herb and Wine Butter

- ½ cup (1 stick) butter
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons fresh chives
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh parsley
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh tarragon
- 1 teaspoon fresh rosemary
- ¼ cup dry white wine
- Juice of ½ lemon
- Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 1½–2 pounds large shrimp, peeled and deveined
- Olive oil
- Lemon wedges, for serving (if desired)

1. In a heavy saucepan, heat the butter and garlic over very low heat, just until the butter sizzles. Stir in the chives, parsley, tarragon and rosemary and cook 1–2 minutes more, then whisk in the wine and lemon juice (charred or fresh) and remove from heat. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

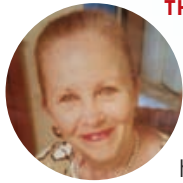
2. Place the shrimp in a large bowl and drizzle with enough olive oil to lightly coat. Season with salt and pepper and toss to combine.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32



See a video online to watch Paula make this recipe.

Gulf Shrimp



THIS MONTH'S RECIPE CONTEST WINNER

KATHRYN TUMA | NUECES EC

This salad can feed a crowd. It's perfect for a hot day, although Tuma has served it at Christmas, too. "I love to garden, and two of my favorite herbs to grow are fresh dill and arugula," she says. "The best dill is fresh dill. If you don't have it on hand, go to your local farmers market or borrow it from a neighbor—tempt them with some salad afterwards."

Texas Gulf Shrimp and Dill Salad

- 1 large lemon, divided use
- 5 pounds Gulf shrimp, shelled and deveined (reserving a few shells)
- 1 package (3 ounces) Zatarain's Crawfish, Shrimp & Crab Boil
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- ¾ cup green olives stuffed with pimientos, plus ½ cup liquid from jar
- 1 tablespoon horseradish
- 1 can (15.5 ounces) red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- ¾ cup chopped fresh dill
- 1 head iceberg lettuce, chopped
- 2 cups arugula
- 6 cups spring greens
- 1-2 cups chopped celery, to taste
- ½-1 cup chopped green onions, to taste

1. Zest lemon to get approximately 1 tablespoon of zest; then cut in half and juice 1 half, reserving juice. Cut other half into slices.
2. Boil shrimp, reserved shells and lemon slices in water with Zatarain's, according to package directions. Drain and cool shrimp in a refrigerator at least 1 hour.
3. In a quart-size container with a tightfitting lid, add mayonnaise, lemon juice, lemon zest, olives, olive liquid, horseradish, kidney beans and dill. Shake to mix. This bean dressing can be made ahead and refrigerated until needed.
4. In a large salad bowl or on a platter, mix lettuce, arugula, spring greens and celery. Top with green onions. Spread cooled shrimp over greens and top with bean dressing. Serve with dinner rolls, potato chips and a refreshing beverage.
▶ Serves 14-16.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

3. Grill the shrimp in a preheated paella pan (or in a wire basket or on skewers) about 5-7 minutes total, stirring frequently, until the shrimp is pink and just tender. (Do not overcook or shrimp will be tough.) Serve warm with additional lemon, if desired. ▶ Serves 4-6.

Shrimp and Grits With Beer Sauce

JAMES FELDMAN | BANDERA EC

This classic combination gets a boost from the beer sauce. "Meant for breakfast, but good all day," Feldman says.

GRIT CAKES

- 2 cups chicken broth
- 2 cups milk
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup stone-ground grits
- Vegetable oil, for frying
- ½ cup flour

SAUCE

- 4 tablespoons (½ stick) butter
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 4 ounces beer

SHRIMP

- 2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1 pound jumbo Gulf shrimp, peeled and deveined

1. GRIT CAKES: Bring broth, milk and salt to a boil. Add grits and cook over medium heat about 20 minutes, stirring constantly. Pour into an 8-by-8-inch or similar size baking pan, so grits are about 1 inch thick. Let cool on counter or in refrigerator for quicker use. Once cool, cut into 4 equal squares.
2. Heat ½ inch of oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Coat the squares with flour, then fry in skillet about 2 minutes per side, until edges are golden brown.
3. SAUCE: Melt butter in a skillet over medium heat. Stir in garlic and all spices, then add beer and reduce heat to low. Let simmer 5-10 minutes, stirring occasionally.



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\$100 Recipe Contest

December's recipe contest topic is **Cookies and Candies**. We know you'll be making these for family and friends over the holidays. Share them with our readers, too. The deadline is **July 10**.

ENTER ONLINE at TexasCoopPower.com/contests; MAIL to 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701; FAX to (512) 763-3401. Include your name, address and phone number, plus your co-op and the name of the contest you are entering.



4. SHRIMP: Melt butter in skillet over medium heat. Add lemon juice and shrimp, cooking shrimp about 2 minutes per side.

5. When ready to serve, put 1 grit cake on a plate, top with 1/4 of the shrimp and pour 1/4 of the sauce over grit cake and shrimp. Serve warm. ▶ Serves 4.

Sweet and Tangy Pickled Shrimp

HONEY HARRELL | UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

- 3 quarts water
- 4 tablespoons Old Bay seasoning
- 4 pounds large Gulf shrimp
- 2 cups vegetable or olive oil
- 1 cup red wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon mustard
- 2 cups ketchup
- 1/2 cup chili sauce
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 3 jars (6 ounces each) whole button mushrooms, drained
- 3 cups whole pearl onions, sliced into very thin rings (or 2 cups

- thinly sliced onion)
- 2 bay leaves
- Saltine crackers (optional)

1. Bring water to a boil and add Old Bay seasoning and shrimp, cooking 4 minutes. Do not overcook. Drain, cool and peel shrimp.

2. In a bowl, whisk together oil, vinegar, mustard, ketchup, chili sauce and paprika.

3. Pack shrimp, mushrooms, onion slices and bay leaves into a large jar or container with a tightfitting lid. Pour oil and vinegar mixture into container. Refrigerate at least 2 days, but preferably longer. Several times a day, turn jar over to marinate evenly. Keeps 1 week.

4. Remove bay leaves before serving. Serve in a chilled bowl with saltine crackers, if desired. ▶ Serves 12-14.

Shrimp Pilaf Florentine

MILLIE KIRCHOFF | NUECES EC

- 1 tablespoon olive or vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup diced red bell pepper

- 2 tablespoons sliced green onion
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 1/2 cups uncooked orzo
- 2 teaspoons fresh chopped dill (or 1/2 teaspoon dried)
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/4 cups chicken broth
- 1 cup water
- 2 cups shredded spinach
- 1 1/2 cups medium Gulf shrimp, shelled and deveined

Grated Parmesan cheese (optional)

1. Heat oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Cook pepper, onion and garlic in oil for 2 minutes, stirring frequently, until they are tender.

2. Stir in orzo, dill, lemon zest, salt, broth and water. Heat to boiling, then reduce heat to low. Cover and simmer 8-10 minutes or until orzo is tender.

3. Stir in spinach and shrimp. Cover and cook 2-3 minutes, until shrimp are pink. Sprinkle with Parmesan, if desired.

▶ Serves 4.

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WEB EXTRAS ▶ See Focus on Texas on our website for more photos from readers.



◀ **CHAD PRAHL**, CoServ: "This hardworking Chevy now rests in Gladewater on my in-laws' land."



▲ **LINDA LEE BICKFORD**, Grayson-Collin EC: "A sweet couple sitting close in the old Ford driving in Texas."

▼ **MARILYN BRUNT**, Deep East Texas EC: "A 1952 Ford rests in Austin after over a half-century of traveling the back roads in the Hill Country."



▲ **TINA WEBB**, Bluebonnet EC: "An old red barn in Fayetteville with a neat, old Chevrolet truck with an American flag."

▼ **MELISSA FONTENETTE-MITCHELL**, Pedernales EC: "Driving down a rural road in Round Rock, I spotted this beautiful old truck resting in the Texas bluebonnets."



UPCOMING CONTESTS

NOVEMBER	UP THE CREEK	DUE JULY 10
DECEMBER	DESERTS	DUE AUGUST 10
JANUARY	FENCES	DUE SEPTEMBER 10

All entries must include name, address, daytime phone and co-op affiliation, plus the contest topic and a brief description of your photo.

ONLINE: Submit highest-resolution digital images at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.
MAIL: Focus on Texas, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701. A stamped, self-addressed envelope must be included if you want your entry returned (approximately six weeks). Please do not submit irreplaceable photographs—send a copy or duplicate. We do not accept entries via email. We regret that *Texas Co-op Power* cannot be responsible for photos that are lost in the mail or not received by the deadline.

Pick of the Month Spicer Gripp Memorial Roping

Hereford August 1-4
(806) 364-5362, spicergripp.com

This event includes roping, dummy roping for youngsters, golf and a barbecue cook-off and honors Spicer Gripp of Hereford. Deaf Smith Electric Cooperative sponsors some of the events. Proceeds help fund scholarships at West Texas A&M University.



July 11

Sachse Space Magic With Brett Roberts,
(972) 530-8966, cityofsachse.com

12

Kerrville [12-13] Kerrville Open Pro Rodeo,
(830) 997-1864, lmrodeo.com

Mason [12-14] Mason County Roundup
Weekend, (325) 347-5758, masontxcoc.com

13

Palacios Poker in Palacios and Seafood
Dinner, (361) 972-2615, palacioschamber.com

Weatherford Parker County Peach Festival,
(817) 596-380, peachfestivaltx.com

18

Athens [18-27] *Beauty and the Beast Jr.*,
(903) 675-3908, hcpcac.org

19

Palestine Romance on the Rails,
(855) 632-7729, texasstaterailroad.net



July 13
Weatherford
Parker County Peach Festival

Dumas [19-20] D'Town Barbecue Cook-Off,
(806) 935-2123, dumaschamber.com

Paris [19-20] Balloon and Music Festival,
(903) 782-6215, parisballoonandmusicfestival.com

Temple [19-20] Wildflower Quilt Guild Quilt
Show, (254) 220-5597, wildflowerquiltguild.com

Ingram [19-20, 26-27, Aug. 2-3] *Mamma
Mia!*, (830) 367-5121, hcac.com

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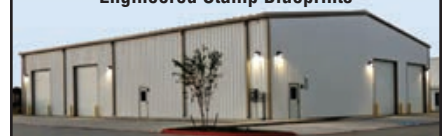
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Brazoria Santa Ana Ball, (979) 248-8323, brazoriahf.org

Caldwell Texas Czech Genealogical Society: Tracing Orphans and Adoptions in Genealogy, (214) 577-0029, txczgs.org

Fredericksburg Night in Old Fredericksburg, (830) 997-2359, gillespiefair.net

Santo Christmas in July, (940) 659-3990

24

Levelland [24-27] Junior Rodeo Cowboy Association Finals, (806) 894-4161, malleventcenter.com

26

Kerrville Movies in the Park, (830) 257-7300, kerrvilletx.gov

Bonham [26-27] Quilt Hop, (903) 583-9830, visitbonham.com

Huntsville [26-27] East Texas Thimble Trail, (936) 594-1237, easttexasthimbletrail.com

Fredericksburg [26-28] Hill Country Auto Swap Meet, (254) 751-7958, earhartproductions.com

Palestine [26-28, Aug. 2-4] My Son Pinocchio, (903) 922-1126, thetexas theater.com

30

Boerne Abendkonzert, (830) 248-1635, visitboerne.org

31

New Braunfels [31-Aug. 4] Lone Star Gourd Festival and Art Show, (210) 468-9924, texasgourdsociety.org



July 26-27
Huntsville
East Texas
Thimble Trail

South Padre Island [31-Aug. 4] Texas International Fishing Tournament, (956) 943-8438, tift.org

August

1

Jacksonville [1-4] Back to School Bash, (903) 724-4100, riverrunpark.com

2

Levelland [2-4] Texas Best Show Series: Lamb Show, (806) 894-4161, malleventcenter.com

3

Corpus Christi South Texas Summer PolkaFest, (361) 215-9163, chssouthtexas.org

4

Frelsburg Sts. Peter & Paul Country Festival, (979) 732-7603

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

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What Lies Beneath

Buffalo Bayou's forgotten cistern returns to public life

FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, ON A VISIT TO ISTANBUL, I descended into a damp underground labyrinth of stone columns known as the Basilica Cistern, which dates to Roman times. The scene was otherworldly, and I thought I would never again see anything like it. Little did I know that I would visit another subterranean marvel that would recall this otherworldly sensation—only this time it would be in Houston.

To understand Houston, one must understand Buffalo Bayou. This muddy waterway flows through the heart of the city and once drove Houston's economy. Simply put, without Buffalo Bayou there would be no Houston. In recent decades, a partnership between the city and a dedicated bayou nonprofit has reclaimed the long-neglected waterway, which now runs through world-class parks and green spaces. The Buffalo Bayou Park Cistern, however, was ignored.

The cistern was built in 1926 to hold approximately 15 million gallons of water for the residents of Houston. It did its job well for more than 80 years, until an irreparable leak caused it to be decommissioned in 2007. With no need for a leaking water tank, the city condemned the space and scheduled it for demolition. While the city searched for a demolition crew, members of the Buffalo Bayou Partnership discovered the space and decided it should be saved. One architect called it "The Cistern" because it reminded him of the one in Istanbul. The name stuck.

At ground level, the only evidence of the Buffalo Bayou Park Cistern is an unremarkable door set into a small hill. That's why it went virtually unnoticed for eight decades. And it is the reason I missed the



The Buffalo Bayou Park Cistern is about the size of 1½ football fields.

entrance three times when I first tried to visit. However, as soon as I stepped through the door and descended into the mysterious sunken world, I knew I was standing somewhere special, in one of only two underground cisterns in the world open for public tours.

I felt dwarfed by the massive room, which measures approximately one and a half football fields. The cistern's 221 concrete columns, each 25 feet tall, gave me the sense that I was standing in an underground Greek temple or even a subterranean Lincoln Memorial. That was a jaw-dropping experience. Then came the light and sound show.

Our tour guide bounced a single flashlight beam off the ceiling and into the 4 inches of water covering the cistern floor. Suddenly, the ground became an entrance into another dimension. OK, not really, but it did transform into a huge reflecting pool with a perfect upside-down reflection of the cistern. Our guide prompted us to be quiet, and when everything was still, she let out a single shout that reverberated off the walls for a full 17 seconds. I've been in

dozens of canyons, including that grand one in Arizona, and I've never heard anything like it. We spent the next hour yelling and shining our phone lights into the abyss.

Even though the room feels like a work of art itself, the cistern lives a new life as an art space. With guidance from the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, artists from around the world visit the Bayou City to take advantage of the cistern's unique sound and light capabilities for their own installations.

In Texas, we have countless buildings, including our Capitol and many county courthouses, that were built to impress. Isn't it ironic that one of our most unique and awe-inspiring spaces was built as a functional reservoir that was never intended to see the light of day? I left the Buffalo Bayou Park Cistern inspired to keep exploring because if something so cool can go unmentioned for 80 years, imagine what other treasures await discovery.

Chet Garner shares his Texplorations as the host of *The Daytripper* on PBS.

 **WEB EXTRAS** ▶ Read this story on our website to see Chet's video of his visit to Buffalo Bayou Park Cistern.



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