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AN OLD PAINTING

THE ART
OF THE SANDWICH

WHEN FATHERHOOD
TURNS GRAND

Texas Coop Power

FOR CECA MEMBERS

JUNE 2026

She Walked the Walk

Opal Lee helped elevate
Juneteenth every step
of the way





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June 2026



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ON THE COVER

Opal Lee at her home on East Annie Street in the Historic Southside neighborhood of Fort Worth.

Photo by Robert Seale

ABOVE

Live Oak Trees on Williams Ranch, Bandera County is a 1915 oil painting by Julian Onderdonk.

Painting by Julian Onderdonk



Volts Charge Into Texas

AFTER A FOUR-TEAM barnstorming season in 2025, the Athletes Unlimited Softball League is set to start its second season with six teams, including one in Texas.

The Texas Volts will return and play their home games at Dell Diamond in Round Rock and join teams based in Chicago; Durham, North Carolina; Oklahoma City; Portland, Oregon; and Salt Lake City.

“Texas is synonymous with softball excellence at every level,” said Kim Ng, the league’s commissioner.

The Volts start their 25-game season June 9 in Oklahoma City. Their first home game is June 18 against the Utah Talons.

“We have simply got to make people aware that none of us are free until we’re all free, and we aren’t free yet.”

— OPAL LEE

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

The greatest innovation in my lifetime is ...

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

Here are some of the responses to our April prompt: **If I could use only one electronic device, it would be ...**

The air conditioner.

MARILYN WERKHEISER
BLUEBONNET EC
BASTROP

My cellphone.

KAT CROSS
HOUSTON COUNTY EC
CROCKETT

My coffee maker.

KERRY BEREND
FORT BELKNAP EC
LOVING

Ham radio. Communication is most important.

GARY DAVID ANTLEY
VIA FACEBOOK

Phone with FaceTime.

JOHNNA HALE
TRINITY VALLEY EC
CANTON

Visit our website to see more responses.



TCP Contests and More

\$500 RECIPE CONTEST
Cranberry Harvest

FOCUS ON TEXAS PHOTOS
Tailgating

RECOMMENDED READING

The Bluebonnet Painter from April 2023 tells more about how Julian Onderdonk’s ethereal South Texas landscapes flourish. Find it on our website.



ENTER ONLINE

APRIL 2026 Kickin' Ashe

“A lot of fitness can still be gained by using a chain saw. The sweat washes off, but the sap stays on the arms for many days.”

RAY WOLBRECHT
PEDERNALES EC
BLANCO



DAVE URBAN

A Whole Mess of Trash

I had seen all the Don't Mess With Texas signs and so was surprised by a surge in litter [A *Tidy Revolution*, March 2026]. I complained and complained to my husband about the litter and the fact that no one seemed worried about it.

Finally, I grew tired of complaining and decided to act. Now, I try to collect litter once a week—one bag of cans and bottles and one bag of trash.

Lynda Southwick
Bluebonnet EC
Brenham

Wear a Life Jacket

I was excited by the paddling trails article [Charted Waters, March 2026]. However, I was dismayed when pictures showed paddlers not wearing life jackets and reading only to “pack a personal flotation device, as required by Texas law.”

While canoeing, I've experienced several hairy situations and would never not wear one. According to the U.S. Coast



ERICH SCHLEGEL

Guard, 85% of boating-related drowning victims were not wearing a life vest.

Kat Saul
Grayson-Collin EC
Allen

Cavalry Hopes

I always wanted to be in the Army cavalry [From Posts to Pillars, February 2026].

When I came of age, the cavalry was no more.

But I knew a man who was born on Fort Ringgold. His father was the post bandmaster. He used to tell me many interesting stories of those times.

Wallace L. Morgan
GVEC
Nixon

Blocker Billboard

Yes, at one time there was a billboard announcing that O'Donnell was the hometown of Dan Blocker [Tiny Dots on a Big Map, January 2026]. Sadly, the fading signage went AWOL, probably blown away by high winds that frequent this part of the High Plains.

Betty Morgan
Bryan Texas Utilities
Bryan

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.

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Texas Co-op Power

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Giant Footsteps

Even as Opal Lee—the Grandmother of Juneteenth—approaches 100, she says her important work isn't done

Opal Lee says she was the “little ol’ lady in tennis shoes getting into everybody else’s business” when, in 2016, at age 89 and buoyed by her faith, she embarked on an ambitious campaign to make Juneteenth a national holiday by walking from her home in Fort Worth to Washington, D.C. Ten years later, the holiday is official, she is celebrated as the Grandmother of Juneteenth and her well-worn tennis shoes are getting a long-deserved rest.

That doesn’t mean the contemporary folk hero is finally settling into idleness—even as she approaches centenarian status (she turns 100 on October 7). And once you get a sense of her life, you realize inactivity is not a concept she embraces. Retirement?

“You’ve got to be kidding!” she quickly retorts, flashing her wide, congenial smile. “People who are old can’t sit in a rocking chair and wait for the Lord to come and get them. There’s still plenty of work to be done, and I’ll do what I can as long as I can.”

She speaks with an eloquent urgency and passion about her work over many decades as a civil rights and community activist who advocated for the homeless, jobless and hungry; for education; and for Juneteenth recognition—all of which she connects to being free. She says she fully intends to continue her work through her belief that “we are our brother’s keeper, and we’d better act like it”—but at a slower pace.

For sure, there will be no more extended walking campaigns. An illness last summer was a setback, and though she’s recovered, the episode supported growing suggestions from her family, which includes 15 grandchildren and 40 great-grandchildren, that it was time to step back a bit.

“It’s been great to see her dream come true, something she’s been after most of her life,” says Promise Roland, one of Lee’s granddaughters and a Fort Worth real estate agent. “It’s been overwhelming, but we’re delighted. She’s been asked to slow down, but that’s not her.

“With her tenacity, she’s going to keep at it; she doesn’t take no for an answer.”

Lee, a 1943 graduate, at age 16, of Fort Worth’s I.M. Terrell High School, has maximized her century on this planet with service to family, church and community. She raised her four children as a young single mother, got a bachelor’s degree in education from Wiley College in Marshall, earned a master’s degree in counseling and guidance in 1963 from North Texas State University (now the University of North Texas), and taught third grade for 15 years at Amanda McCoy Elementary School, her alma mater.

She helped start a food bank by contributing fresh produce grown in her 5-acre urban farm that also helps address Tarrant County food deserts.

She is an iconic, revered change agent, so getting into everybody else’s business—good trouble—teaching and helping others is what she does, and she does it very well. She’s received eight honorary doctorates, was named 2021 Texan of the Year by *The Dallas Morning News*, was a Nobel Peace Prize nominee and received the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In 2023, her portrait was placed in the Texas Senate Chamber, making her only the second Black person (after U.S. Rep. Barbara Jordan) so honored. In January, Mattel introduced the “Opal Barbie.”

Opal Lee on her Juneteenth walks: “If people can be taught to hate, they can be taught to love. The promise of freedom is only as strong as those who choose to uphold it. Will you rise to the occasion or stand still as history passes you by?”





COURTESY OPAL'S WALK 2 DC TEAM

LEFT Lee walks for her cause in February 2020 in Las Vegas.

BELOW Lee, on her porch in November 2025, lives on the same Fort Worth plot where, in 1939, a mob burned down her family's home.

Despite it all, Lee lives in a modest new house on Fort Worth's East Annie Street—on the same corner lot where, in 1939, her family's home was burned down by a mob of 500 angry would-be neighbors who objected to the family integrating the neighborhood. It happened on Juneteenth.

Her new house was a gift from Trinity Habitat for Humanity in 2024 as a tribute to Lee, one of the nonprofit's founding board members.

The Marshall native was a child when she first learned about the date June 19, 1865, when Union Gen. Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston to make the first notifications that enslaved Texans were free—two and a half years after President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. She joined family and friends annually to celebrate the day with “plenty of food, food and more food.”

Lee was a co-founder in 1977 of the Tarrant County Black Historical and Genealogical Society, through which she organized Fort Worth's Juneteenth events, including walks, for 40 years. But she felt there was more she could do.

A quest was born: Make Juneteenth a national holiday.

Her plan was to walk to D.C. and present a signed petition to Congress as a symbol of nationwide support for passage



*I don't feel no ways tired,
I've come too far from where
I started from.
Nobody told me that the road
would be easy,
I don't believe He brought me
this far to leave me.*

—African American spiritual

of the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act. Forty-seven states, including Texas, had already established state holidays or observances.

The octogenarian took to the road, her T-shirt emblazoned with “Opal’s Walk for Freedom,” and was joined by thousands of diverse supporters, many carrying homemade signs of support (“Go, Ms. Opal!”) and walking with her in festive, joyous parades.

“I just started walking, and people started participating, coming to join me, finding a place for me to stay,” she said. “I got 1.5 million signatures. I met all kinds of people, not just those in power. People who were beginning to understand what the day was all about. Not just red soda water and barbecue, but there was meaning to it. People embraced Juneteenth.”

The distance between Fort Worth and D.C. is a little over 1,200 miles as the crow flies. Lee took the scenic route, walking a symbolic 2.5 miles (for the two and a half years it took for news of emancipation to reach Texas) in 20 cities that supported her movement and invited her to walk, including Shreveport, Louisiana; Atlanta; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Pueblo, Colorado; Chicago; and Philadelphia.

She began the walks in September 2016 and four months later was in Washington with the completed petition. Almost five years later, the act passed and was signed into law by President Joe Biden on June 17, 2021.

“I was so happy, I could have done a holy dance!” Lee says.

The crown jewel for her work is the \$70 million state-of-the-art National Juneteenth Museum slated to break ground in Fort Worth later this year. The 50,000-square-foot cultural center is billed as “the epicenter for the preservation of Juneteenth history.”

“Dr. Lee’s advocacy is the foundation on which the museum was established,” says Jarred Howard, the museum’s CEO. “We’re thrilled to collaborate with Dr. Lee and are committed to expanding her extraordinary legacy through the creation of a world-class learning center.”

Though she isn’t moving quite as much now, Lee’s family is gladly taking the baton to keep her legacy going. Her granddaughters are active board members for Lee’s non-



RENDERING COURTESY NATIONAL JUNETEENTH MUSEUM

National Juneteenth Museum

Destined for Fort Worth’s Historic Southside, plans include:

- 10,000 square feet of immersive exhibit space
- A 250-seat theater for lectures, performances and other events
- A business incubator and coworking space
- A food hall featuring culturally diverse cuisine
- The National Juneteenth Plaza, a public courtyard and green space

profit foundation, Citizens Concerned with Human Dignity. The organization assists marginalized families in need of shelter, food, employment, healthcare and education.

“It’ll take more than one person to fill her shoes,” Roland says, “so it will truly be a family effort. She still has a lot of fire, but it’s time for us to do the heavy lifting.”

Lee’s fire has always been about teaching and the fertile minds of young folks, and that flame burns as brightly as ever, sparked by her successful Juneteenth campaigns.

“I want the young people to realize how important Black history is and for them to embrace it, know their history and pass it on,” she says. “The road to true freedom is long, but I’ve walked it my whole life.” ■



TCP Enter online to win two signed illustrated children’s books about Opal Lee’s life.



ENTER ONLINE



J.O. WAS HERE

The history of this
Hill Country vista
goes right through
a century-old
Julian Onderdonk
painting

BY JOHN R. MILLARD

The west prong of the Medina River arises in Bandera County and flows eastward, fed by underground springs amid steep, canyon-carved terrain northwest of San Antonio. The flow traces a serpentine path through oak and cedar groves, rocky outcrops, and grassy slopes before joining the north prong near the town of Medina.

In 1915, this area was still a wild frontier—sparsely settled, with vast ranches dominating the landscape. The Medina Lake dam, completed in 1912, altered downstream flows, but the upper prongs retained their pristine character: clear waters, rocky riverbeds, and dense cedar and live oak groves.

It was beautiful country. I know this because Julian Onderdonk stopped here in 1915, set up an easel and canvas, and got to painting—and I can prove it.

It all started with a chance discovery: a digital image of an Onderdonk oil painting called *Gulf Clouds in the Hills on the West Prong of the Medina River* instantly caught my eye—not just for its beauty but for its uncanny resemblance to our land.

“Debra,” I called out to my wife, “you won’t believe it, but this is our property.”



I had just hiked those ridges that morning, stood on that same bluff and looked down at that same striated rock in the riverbed. The landscape in the painting wasn't just similar—it was ours.

What started as a curious observation turned into a historical investigation—one that led me through Texas archives, family lore and conversations with art experts, historians and ranchers. The deeper I dug, the more the story grew. Not just one painting but possibly four were painted by Onderdonk during a 1915 visit to what was then known as the Williams Ranch, now part of our West Prong Ranch.

We acquired the property in January 2024—one of seven tracts carved from the historic Garrison Ranch, originally established in the late 1800s. Like many historic properties, the ranch evolved over time—its boundaries reshaped by sales, inheritances and a legal dispute—but the same beauty remains.

John R. Millard was stunned to discover that a 1915 Julian Onderdonk painting, above, portrays a view he enjoys on his Bandera County property, opposite. It's undeniable, Millard says.

Gulf Clouds in the Hills on the West Prong of the Medina River

1915

Oil on panel

Lusher Art Collection

This painting demonstrates the complex geographic identity of San Antonio's countryside. The title and fluffy white clouds indicate the region's proximity to the Gulf Coast. Green hills, characteristic of Central and South Texas, form the horizon. The west prong, illustrated here, is one of two main sections of the Medina River. The nearly dry river exposes the limestone bed, and there is just enough water to reflect the blue sky.

The Man With the Brush

Often called the “Father of Texas Art,” Onderdonk left an indelible mark on American impressionism with his radiant Hill Country portrayals. Born in San Antonio in 1882, he trained under his father, artist Robert Jenkins Onderdonk, and later under William Merritt Chase in New York, honing his eye for light and texture.

Returning to Texas in 1909, Onderdonk fused Chase’s plein air, or open air, philosophy of painting outdoors with the rugged splendor of his homeland.

Onderdonk’s works—vibrant with color, delicately executed and alive with natural beauty—earned acclaim during his lifetime and reverence after his death in 1922.

Today his paintings command high prices: *Blue Bonnet Field, Early Morning, San Antonio Texas* sold for \$515,000 in 2013. Two other pieces sold for \$317,000 and \$281,000 at that same auction in Dallas. His works have been on display in all



of Texas’ major art museums, and several paintings even hung in the Oval Office when George W. Bush was president.

Each of the four 1915 paintings features terrain elements that resemble areas on or near our property—with live oaks, horizon lines and familiar contours we can still observe today. While there’s no direct evidence or documentation of such an excursion, the visual similarities raise the possibility they were painted during a multiday journey by mule into this remote region.

I hiked back out to the bend in the river and took a photo. From that vantage point,

the similarities were undeniable. The limestone bluffs, the curve of the hills, the river’s arc and the distinctive limestone formations in the riverbed all aligned with striking precision—like fingerprints.

It was a match. Onderdonk’s *Gulf Clouds in the Hills on the West Prong of the Medina River* portrays the very terrain we

now call home—capturing its distinctive topography with remarkable accuracy.

Collector of the Clouds

But for this discovery to be taken seriously, it needed more than compelling visual similarities; it needed validation from people who know Onderdonk best.

Art dealer Harry Halff is the foremost authority on Onderdonk

and author of the artist’s catalogue raisonné—the definitive scholarly resource documenting the artist’s body of work.

“There is no doubt in my mind that the painting’s location is on your ranch,” Halff wrote in an email after reviewing the photographic comparisons and supporting documentation. “This may be one of the rare Onderdonk landscapes still visually tied to a named site today.”

Ted Lusher agreed with that assessment. He’s a respected collector of Texas art and history whose personal archive includes rare artifacts of Texas and Onderdonk’s original *Gulf Clouds in the Hills* itself.

“There’s no question in my mind,” he wrote of the similarities to our land. “The alignment of terrain and artistic detail is too precise to be coincidental.”

In 1915, traveling from San Antonio to Bandera County—about 50 miles away to the northwest—was challenging. With FM 337 not established until 1945, Onderdonk would have traveled over steep dirt trails and caliche paths, common in rural Texas at the time.

Automobiles like the Ford Model T had existed since 1908 but were impractical in the Hill Country’s rough conditions, especially for an artist of modest means. Instead, Onderdonk

“
For us, this land has become something rare—
a kind of living time machine. The terrain remains
so untouched, the features so distinctive, that the
gap between today and 1915 seems to vanish.
”



OPPOSITE, FROM TOP
A 1901 portrait of
Onderdonk, one of
Texas' artistic masters,
by William Merritt
Chase. Millard stands
with Daisy Jane on the
property he bought
with his wife in 2024.
He considers their
ranch a living gallery.

RIGHT Millard's research
into Onderdonk
suggests *Windmill
on Williams Ranch*
was also painted on
his property in 1915.



JULIAN ONDERDONK

likely used horse-drawn transport, such as wagons or buggies for flatter areas, and possibly mules for the steeper terrain.

Half notes that Onderdonk was “not averse to long hikes in the country,” often walking out into the hills armed with his easel, canvas and paints.

While Half has not found any direct references to mule travel, he considers it “entirely plausible” that Onderdonk may have ridden by mule into more remote terrain.

The Muleman Next Door

That brings us to Paul Garrison III, our neighbor and a skilled mule skinner.

Garrison's family has lived and ranched on this land for five generations, and he carries forward the family legacy as the owner of Garrison Mulemanship and Training, a program known far and wide for cultivating the unique partnership between mules and their handlers.

Garrison and I discussed how Onderdonk might have reached this rugged, steep land more than a century ago. “There's no way he got there by car,” he said. “You'd need a good mule—maybe two. This is classic mule country.”

Before the Garrison family—and long before us—the land was known as the Williams Ranch. One of its earliest first-hand accounts comes from Samuel H. Sutton, who was born in 1850 and moved here in 1876.

One memory stood out for Sutton, writing for *Frontier Times Magazine* in 1928: He and his wife were washing clothes at the confluence of Cazey Creek and the west prong of the Medina River when they were surprised by Native Americans on a bluff above them. Sutton grabbed his rifle, his heart pounding. The moment passed without violence, but the tension and terrain left a mark on him.

His description of the bluff and the wash spot corresponds closely to the same curve and elevation where *Gulf Clouds in the Hills* was likely painted. It's fascinating to think that within a few decades, this same bluff and river could have

been the setting for a settler's tense moment and an artist's quiet observation.

Preserving the View

One of the most remarkable aspects of this story is how little the land has changed, and Debra and I are determined to keep it that way. We've intentionally avoided building in areas that would disrupt the natural setting and have left existing trails undisturbed.

For us, this land has become something rare—a kind of living time machine. The terrain remains so untouched, the features so distinctive, that the gap between today and 1915 seems to vanish.

Visitors notice it, too. When we show them the digital image of the painting beside the actual view, there's often a long pause, followed by some variation of: “This place hasn't changed at all.”

In a constantly evolving world, finding proof that a landscape has stayed so consistent is unusual. The land reflects the same beauty Onderdonk captured, and now, more than a century later, we can see it just as he did.

As landowners, we're stewards of something much greater than ourselves. Our ranch is more than just acreage. It's a living gallery—one that requires no velvet ropes, no security guards and no admission fee. Just boots, curiosity and a willingness to see.

We didn't set out to uncover a hidden chapter in Texas art history. But once we realized what we were standing on, it became clear: This land belongs to history. To Onderdonk. To Sutton. To the Garrisons. And to everyone who's ever paused to marvel at the way clouds move across the hills.

Gulf Clouds in the Hills isn't just oil on canvas. It's evidence. That Onderdonk stood here. That he saw what we see. And that he found it beautiful enough to preserve forever.

We're honored to be part of that continuum. ■

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Our Bone-ified Best Blade

This knife says you're no one to mess with



"It's a beautiful knife with a great blade and a sure grip"

— William B. Wilmington, NC

My friend Sergio is a mixed martial arts fighter. His shoulders are broad. His muscles have muscles. He's not the kind of person you want to be on the wrong side of.

This manly man has a saying about being tough: You should either know how to fight or look like you do.

The message is simple enough. People spoiling for a fight usually don't pick the biggest guy in the bar. If you look like someone who shouldn't be messed with, you likely won't be. With our Blue Bone Bowie Knife on your hip, that's exactly the message you'll send.

As beautiful as it is functional, this knife is 10" overall and features a high-quality 420 surgical stainless steel blade with a serrated spine. The handle is constructed of genuine natural bone with redwood spacers. On the handle you'll find design work that's carved by hand, a testament to its craftsmanship.

This knife is stick tang, meaning it won't wimp out when you need it. This knife also features brass hand guards and brass spacers with file work, so you won't lose your grip. For easy carrying, it comes with a genuine tooled leather sheath. **CALL NOW!** If you're one of the first 700-587 callers for this ad, we'll throw in a pair of *Stauer Pocket Binoculars* — a \$99 value — **ABSOLUTELY FREE!**

Walk around with the Blue Bone Bowie Knife and you'll feel a lot safer. I know I do.

Knife Specifications:

- 10" overall length
- 420 surgical stainless steel and stick tang construction
- Genuine natural bone and redwood hand-carved handle
- Genuine leather sheath included

Blue Bone Bowie Knife

~~\$299~~ \$79* + S & P **Save \$220**

**Special price only for customers using the offer code.*

EXCLUSIVE **FREE**

**Stauer Pocket
Binoculars**
a \$99 value

with your purchase of the
Blue Bone Bowie Knife



1-800-333-2045

Your Insider Offer Code: **BBK196-02**

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Stauer | AFFORD THE EXTRAORDINARY



MESSAGE
FROM
GENERAL
MANAGER

ALAN
LESLEY

Empowering Members: Your Cooperative at Work

JUNE IS ONE of my favorite times of the year. Schools are out, families are making plans and there's a real sense of energy in the communities we serve. It's also a good time for me to share what your cooperative has been up to and remind you of some of the ways we're working to make life a little easier for our members.

At CECA, everything we do comes back to one idea: We're here to help. That's not just a tagline. It's built into the structure of who we are. As a member of this cooperative, you're not just a customer, you're an owner. Every decision our board makes, every program we offer, every investment we make in this system is made with you in mind.

Your co-op, your board. CECA is led by seven directors elected directly from the membership, each representing a district within our service area and serving a three-year term. Local people making decisions for local people—that's how it should be, and I'm proud of how that model continues to serve us well.

Reliability you can count on. We take pride in the reliability of the system we maintain for you. In 2025, our reliability rate was 99.97%, meaning the average member experienced roughly two hours without power for the entire year.

That doesn't happen by accident. It takes dedicated crews working year-round to maintain lines, upgrade equipment and respond quickly when something does go wrong. I'm proud of the work they do every day to keep your lights on.

We also listen. Last year, our members gave us an overall satisfaction score of 87, and that means a great deal to our team. We don't take that for granted, and we'll keep working to earn it.

Investment in our communities. This month, I'm especially proud to recognize three young people from our communities: Logan Campbell, Elijah McMorris and Raney Pratt. They were selected by an independent judging panel to represent CECA on the Government-in-Action Youth Tour, an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., this month.

They'll come home with a deeper understanding of leadership, history and what electric cooperatives mean to rural America. These are exactly the kinds of investments I believe matter most.

That spirit of investment extends through Operation Round Up, one of the programs I'm most grateful for. Participating members simply allow their monthly bill to be rounded up to the next whole

dollar. Those cents add up quickly, and every dollar is distributed locally by an independent board of CECA members to schools, families and community organizations right here in our area.

Operation Round Up also helps fund Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, which delivers free books each month to children from birth to age 5 in our service area. It's a small act with a big impact, and I love that it starts in our own backyard.

Programs that put members first. As a CECA member, you earn capital credits. When we have margins remaining after covering expenses, that money is allocated back to you as equity and not kept by a corporation somewhere else.

The board reviews financial conditions each year and, when appropriate, authorizes a return of those credits to members. It's one of the real perks of being part of a cooperative rather than a traditional utility.

We also offer the opportunity to enroll in Air Evac Lifeteam for just \$5 a month. In rural areas, emergency air transport can carry a bill that most families aren't prepared for. This voluntary membership helps protect you and your household from that cost, and I'd encourage anyone who hasn't looked into it to give us a call.

Stay connected and in control. Managing your account should be simple, and we've worked to make it that way. Online account management, the CECA mobile app, prepaid billing, budget billing and multiple ways to report an outage are all available to you.

We also offer text and email alerts so you're never left wondering about the state of your account. Whether it's an outage notification, a billing reminder or a payment confirmation, we'll keep you informed the way that works best for you.

Get involved this fall. Watch for your invitation to this year's district meetings in the July issue of *Texas Co-op Power*.

If you're in districts 2 or 4, you'll have the opportunity to participate in selecting your district's nominee for the board. Those nominees will then appear on the ballot at our annual membership appreciation meeting in October, when all members can vote. I hope to see you there.

This is your cooperative. We're here to serve you. We're always open to hearing from our members, so please don't hesitate to reach out with your thoughts, questions or feedback. Your voice matters here, and it always will. ■



Local Students Head to DC

SURROUNDED BY ICONIC American landmarks in Washington, D.C., students from across Texas will soon step into a once-in-a-lifetime experience as part of the Government-in-Action Youth Tour, sponsored by electric cooperatives across the state.

Three local students will represent CECA and its communities, June 14–21, on this unforgettable journey: **Logan Campbell** of Gorman High School, **Elijah McMorris** of Premier High School—Comanche and **Raney Pratt** of Comanche High School.

Selected by an independent judging panel, these outstanding young leaders earned their place through hard work, character and a commitment to learning. They will join more than 140 other students on this adventure.

Youth Tour, inspired by then-Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson in 1957, was created to give students a firsthand look at what the American flag represents and stands for. Since its beginning, the program has reached more than 50,000 students nationwide, leaving a lasting impact on generations of young Americans.

What started as an opportunity for students to work in Johnson’s office during the summer evolved into a nationwide initiative in 1964 through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. Today, more than 1,900 students participate each year.

As these three students prepare to embark on their journey, they carry with them not only the pride of their schools and hometowns but also the opportunity to grow. By the time they return home, they will have gained a deeper understanding of leadership, a stronger connection to our nation’s history and a clearer appreciation for what electric cooperatives mean to rural America.

These are the kinds of investments that matter most—ones that shape future leaders, strengthen communities and ensure the cooperative spirit continues for generations to come. ■





Keep Scammers Out During Outages

SCAMMERS TAKE ADVANTAGE when widespread power outages occur. Don't fall victim to their tricks.

When severe weather knocks out your electricity, scammers sometimes see an opportunity. They may contact you posing as a CECA employee, urging you to act quickly and provide personal information to restore service.

Scammers might say they're sorry your power is out and offer reimbursement but first require your bank account information. Or they might say there's an error in their system and ask you to hand over personal information before they can restore power. They might even threaten to leave your utilities off if you don't send money immediately.

Don't fall for these lies.

Always communicate with CECA through official channels, such as by visiting ceca.coop or by calling 1-800-915-2533. Your safety and personal information are worth taking a moment to pause and verify unknown senders. If something feels off about a call or message, trust your instincts—it's always better to double-check than to risk compromising your personal or financial information.

The Federal Communications Commission and CECA recommend taking these actions if you receive a call you think might be a scam.

If you get a suspicious call, thank the caller and hang up. Never call a number left in a voicemail, text or email by a suspi-

cious source. If you're worried, contact the co-op directly using a trusted number.

If you get a call out of the blue and the caller claims you have to pay a past-due bill or your electricity or other services will be shut off, never give banking information over the phone. To pay your bill over the phone, always place the call to a number you know is legitimate.

Scammers rely on panic to cloud your judgment. Take a breath, slow down and remember that we will always give you time and options to resolve an account issue.

If the caller tells you to pay by gift card, cash reload card, money transfer or cryptocurrency, it's a scam. You can report suspicious calls to the FCC at fcc.gov/consumers or to your local authorities to help protect others in your community.

Sharing your experience with neighbors and fellow members is one of the most effective ways to stop scammers from finding their next victim.

As a member-owned cooperative, CECA is committed to transparent, respectful communication with every member we serve. If you're ever unsure whether a message is legitimate, don't hesitate to reach out.

Protecting you from fraud is something we take seriously, and no question is too small when your security is at stake. ■

Inspire a Love for Reading, One Book at a Time

CECA'S OPERATION ROUND-UP is bringing the magic of reading to your doorstep with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. CECA Operation Round-Up sponsors free books for children age 5 and under.

Each month, participating families receive a high-quality, age appropriate book delivered right to their doorstep. Each book is personalized with the child's name and meant to spark a love of reading from the very beginning.

The books are carefully chosen by a panel of childhood literacy experts and include tips on the inside cover for enhancing engagement and interaction between the child and their caregiver. Twice a year, children also receive bilingual Spanish and English titles to support early language development.

CECA Operation Round-Up's support ensures that the program is available at no cost to families within our service area. It's one way we live out the Seventh Cooperative Principle of Concern for Community and help children grow and learn before they ever step into a classroom.

Books have a way of creating quiet moments, big dreams and lifelong habits. With every book that arrives in the mail, children gain something far more valuable than a story. They gain confidence, curiosity and connection.

To sign up, visit ceca.coop/imagination-library or scan the QR code above. ■

Dolly Parton, founder of the Imagination Library, with young readers, highlighting the program's mission to provide free, high-quality books to children from birth to age 5 and foster a lifelong love of reading.



DOLLYWOOD FOUNDATION

Comanche Electric Cooperative Association

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

CONTACT US

349 Industrial Blvd.
Comanche, TX 76442
Toll-Free 1-800-915-2533
Web ceca.coop

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24/7

**Outage
Hotline
Number**

CECA crews are available 24/7 in the event of a power quality issue.

TOLL-FREE
1-800-915-2533

ABOUT CECA

CECA operates in Brown, Callahan, Comanche, Eastland, Mills, Shackelford and Stephens counties.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Esta institución es un proveedor de servicios con igualdad de oportunidades.

OFFICE LOCATIONS

Headquarters

349 Industrial Blvd., Comanche, TX 76442
Monday–Friday, 7:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Early

1801 CR 338, Early, TX 76801
Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 7:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Closed from 1–2 p.m.

Eastland

1311 W. Main St., Eastland, TX 76448
Tuesday and Thursday, 8 a.m.–4 p.m.

VISIT US ONLINE

ceca.coop



Check us out at
TexasCoopPower.com/comanche

Lightning Safety Word Search

Did you know June 21-27 is National Lightning Safety Awareness Week?

Lightning can happen fast and be very dangerous but staying safe is easy when you know what to do! Read the following safety tips, then find and circle the **bolded** words in the puzzle below.



- When thunder roars, go **indoors**! If you can hear thunder, **lightning** is close enough to be dangerous.
- Stay away from all **water** sources. Don't swim, use hoses or play near standing water when a **storm** is present.
- Avoid tall things and open spaces. Stay away from **tall trees**, poles and open fields where lightning tends to **strike**.
- Wait 30 minutes after the last sound of **thunder**. Even if the rain stops, **wait** at least 30 minutes before going back outside.

H	M	E	K	H	I	S	O	D	G	W	R	D	A	Q
I	L	Y	T	U	O	K	Y	K	P	A	E	G	Z	T
A	E	I	I	N	D	O	O	R	S	T	D	B	J	A
T	A	K	G	P	H	O	P	J	F	E	N	K	G	L
W	D	J	I	H	P	Q	J	M	G	R	U	Z	R	P
M	S	E	E	R	T	L	L	A	T	S	H	W	S	R
N	D	O	T	Z	T	N	G	L	L	T	T	J	V	I
Q	D	O	R	Z	H	S	I	P	Y	T	L	J	W	V
E	G	J	R	T	Y	J	D	N	U	P	V	T	T	Q
V	I	A	Y	X	C	U	Y	N	G	W	Z	B	M	X
I	I	A	T	V	D	O	M	W	P	A	L	S	T	V
D	O	U	J	S	B	W	A	R	X	C	T	W	O	H
E	Y	E	S	J	P	P	P	R	B	O	F	M	Q	H
V	O	K	R	M	C	G	X	O	R	D	A	O	D	V
T	G	B	X	N	B	R	K	M	X	B	I	F	K	U

Community Calendar

Brownwood

Shrek the Musical; June 27–28, July 4–5, 12 at 2:30 p.m. and June 26–27, July 3–4, 10–11 at 7:30 p.m.; Lyric Theatre. Join Shrek, Donkey, Fiona and all your favorite fairytale misfits in this hilarious and heart-warming musical adventure! Based on the Oscar-winning DreamWorks Animation film, *Shrek the Musical* brings the beloved story to life on stage with dazzling songs, side-splitting humor, and a powerful message about friendship and self-acceptance. When the ogre Shrek sets out to rescue Princess Fiona, he discovers that true beauty is more than skin deep—and that even the unlikeliest heroes can find their happily ever after. Filled with fun for the whole family, you won't want to miss this big, bright, beautiful celebration of love and laughter. For more information, visit brownwoodlyrictheatre.com.

Roald Dahl's Matilda Jr. The Musical; July 24 at 7:30 p.m. and July 25–26 at 2:30 p.m.; Lyric Theatre. Inspired by Roald Dahl's beloved story, *Matilda Jr.* celebrates the power of imagination, courage and standing up for what's right. When a brilliant young girl discovers her extraordinary gifts, she dares to take a stand against the cruel adults who underestimate her. Packed with catchy songs, clever humor and inspiring heart, this high-energy show—performed by our local youth—will delight kids and adults alike! For more information, visit brownwoodlyrictheatre.com.

Cisco

Cisco Writers Club Writing Contest, June 1–July 31. Welcoming writers of all ages from anywhere in the world. All entries must be original, unpublished and not AI-generated. Visit ciscowritersclub.org/annual-writing-contest, call (254) 631-3611 or email ciscowritersclub@cs.com for more information.

cs.com for more information.

Chamber of Commerce Golf Scramble, June 6, 8 a.m., Rolling Oaks Golf Club in Rising Star. Event, date and time are subject to change. Call (254) 442-2537 or email ciscochamberofcommerce@gmail.com for more information.

For more information, contact the Cisco Chamber of Commerce at (254) 442-2537 or ciscochamberofcommerce@gmail.com.

Comanche

Arts and Crafts Show, June 12–26, Comanche County Museum, 402 Moorman Road. All are invited to bring their homemade arts and crafts items and paintings to display at the museum. Bring your items to the museum by 4 p.m. June 11. This art show is for adults and kids.

White House Afternoon Tea Time, July 9, 2–3:30 p.m., Comanche County Museum, 402 Moorman Road. The museum will host an afternoon tea time featuring recipes from *The White House Family Cookbook* by Henry Haller, executive chef, and tea service from the Newburg Annex.

Family Game Day, July 23, 4:30–6:30 p.m., Comanche County Museum, 402 Moorman Road. Featuring adult and children's games. We will supply plenty of tables and chairs and games. You bring your family and favorite soda. We will also serve tea and water with ice.

For more information, contact Comanche Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture at comanchetxchamber@gmail.com or (325) 356-3233.

Early

Kid's Fishing Tournament, June 6, Early Town Center, 109 Kelcy Way. Join the

Kiwanis Club of Brownwood for a fun-filled morning of fishing. This in-person event is perfect for kids 16 and under who love the outdoors and want to learn how to fish. The first 150 to register will get a free rod, reel and bait. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department will provide limited loaner tackle. Additionally, there will be educational programs from TPWD Inland Fisheries, state parks, law enforcement and Heart of Texas Nature Center. Bring your fishing gear or borrow some of ours—either way, get ready to catch some fish! Email dhudson-brian@earlytx.net for more information.

Lake Brownwood

Reptiles With a Ranger; June 13, 27 and July 11, 25; 2:30–3:45 p.m.; Lake Brownwood State Park; 200 State Highway Park Road 15. Join a ranger to observe and touch a few harmless reptiles, including a Texas indigo snake and a speckled kingsnake. We will discuss the ecological importance of our native reptiles as well as the biology of these animals. In addition, there will be pictures, snake sheds, turtle shells and other materials guests can touch and interact with. Bring a sense of curiosity to the Group Dining Hall. Free with park entrance. For more information, contact George Dudich at (325) 784-5223 or george.dudich@tpwd.texas.gov.

Wilderness Survival Hike, Fridays in June and July, 1:30–2:45 p.m., Texas Oak Trailhead at Lake Brownwood State Park. Do you know what natural resources could help you survive out in the wild? Join a ranger to learn about the plants and other resources Native Americans used in our area. Resources utilized by early European settlers will be covered as well. The science behind the medicinal plants will be discussed as well as their use, safety and efficacy.

Star Party, June 13, 8:30–10:30 p.m., Day Use Area at Lake Brownwood State Park. Join us for a night under the stars to learn about what's out there in the night sky! Bring a red light, folding chair or blanket. This event is free with park admission. Program is weather dependent. Call our office during operating hours (8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.) to check the status of the program.

Comanche Electric Cooperative Association welcomes your local event submissions.

If you have any events you would like listed in the Community Calendar, please contact Triston McGehee. Event information must be submitted two months in advance for the magazine. The calendar is published monthly and includes events scheduled for the month of publication and the following month. CECA reserves the right to edit or exclude events based on space availability and other considerations. We do not certify the accuracy or reliability of any information posted in the Community Calendar. To confirm event details, please contact the event organizers directly. Email tmcgehee@ceca.coop; write to CECA at P.O. Box 729, Comanche, TX 76531; or call 1-800-915-2533.



GORDENKOFF | ISTOCK.COM

Grill Safely This Father's Day

DADS KNOW: GRILLING outdoors is not only a good way to keep your house cooler and lower your energy bill but also a great way to enjoy Father's Day.

But make sure safety is a priority. Each year, grill fires cause thousands of injuries and millions of dollars in property loss, according to the National Fire Protection Association. Most grill fires can be prevented with proper maintenance and safe use.

Stay safe by following these simple tips from Safe Electricity, a program of the Energy Education Council.

No matter which type of grill you prefer, keep it clean by removing grease or fat buildup from grates and trays. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for proper cleaning practices.

Keep a fire extinguisher nearby, and make sure everyone present knows how to use it.

Place the grill on a stable surface, away from homes, deck railings and overhanging branches.

Keep children and pets at least 3 feet away.

Never leave an active grill unattended.

Use propane and charcoal grills outdoors only, which prevents fire hazards and carbon monoxide poisoning.

Gas grills pose a greater fire risk due to the potential for leaks. To ensure safe grilling, check hoses for leaks each season.

Charcoal Grills

Only use starter fluid designed for grills, never gasoline or other flammable liquids.

Never add lighter fluid to a lit fire—this causes flare-ups.

Store starter fluid away from heat sources and out of children's reach.

Let coals and ashes cool completely before disposing of them in a metal container.

Electric Grills

Ensure your electric grill is outdoor rated to withstand exposure to moisture and varying temperatures.

Never use an electric grill in rainy or wet conditions. Store the grill in a dry place when not in use.

Keep electrical connections away from water, damp surfaces and pools to avoid electric shock.

Always plug your grill into a ground-fault circuit interrupter outlet to protect against shocks. If using an extension cord, make sure it's outdoor-rated and GFCI-protected.

Check the power cord for frays, cracks or damage before use. ■

Have Cool Fun Without the AC

WHEN TEMPERATURES RISE, so can your electric bill as everyone heads inside. Encourage kids to stay cool with these activities that get them outdoors and don't require cranking up the air conditioner.

Jump rope water challenge: Take turns spinning the jump rope while the person jumping holds a paper cup of water. Whoever has the most water in their cup after 10 hops wins.

Ice-age excavation: Take waterproof children's toys and freeze them in blocks of ice. Use kid-friendly tools to chip and melt away the ice to expose the toys.

Cold sweets: Freeze fruit juice or fruit purée poured into ice pop molds or ice cube trays to make cool treats. Ice cream is also a summer staple. To enjoy this summer favorite sans electricity, use a hand-crank ice cream maker.

Plastic waterslide: Whether rented, purchased or improvised with a tarp and hose, a flexible plastic waterslide can provide hours of wet and wild entertainment for the whole family.

Water fight: Challenge your children to a battle with water balloons or squirt guns. Evaporation will help keep you cool! Just be sure to pick up all the balloon pieces when you're done so the little bits don't become litter or choking hazards.

Water table: A water table puts water and toys at toddler height for outdoor play. Create a "duck pond" with rubber duckies and a shallow plastic tub, or make a pouring station with various sized buckets and pitchers.

Water-gun painting: Take this art project outdoors and away from surfaces that you want to keep clean. Fill water guns with washable, nontoxic paint and use them to squirt a piece of paper set up on an easel. ■



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DID YOU KNOW?

You can compare your home's annual energy use with similar homes using Energy Star's Home Energy Yardstick at energystar.gov.

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POWER TIP

Inspect the seal between your room air conditioning unit and the window frame to ensure cool air isn't escaping.

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Texas: Forever in Your Heart



1. Heart of Texas Women's Hoodie

3. Personalized Heart of Texas Women's Denim Jacket



Hoodie and tote feature a silver-tone Texas charm



2. Heart of Texas Quilted Tote



Denim Jacket Personalized FREE with your name or initials

1. Heart of Texas Women's Hoodie

This cozy ivory hoodie is expertly crafted of an easy-care cotton blend knit and features a detailed image of a cowgirl boot and hat next to the embroidered saying, "You Can Take The Girl Out Of Texas, But You Can't Take The Texas Out Of The Girl." Additional details include fun embroidered accents, soft contrasting taupe jersey knit-lined hood, front hip pockets, full front zipper, knit cuffs and a straight hem for an extra comfortable fit. A silver-tone zipper pull shaped like the State of Texas with a heart cutout completes this classic country girl design. Imported. Available in women's sizes S-3X. *Item price: \$99.99, payable in 3 easy installments of \$33.33 each (plus a total of \$19.99 s + s*) Add \$10 for sizes 1X-3X*

2. Heart of Texas Quilted Tote

This Texas-inspired quilted tote features classic country styling with a sentiment every Texas girl knows by heart. Framed in a bold red bandana print, the front and back feature a cowgirl boot and hat alongside the saying, "You Can Take The Girl Out Of Texas, But You Can't Take The Texas Out Of The Girl." Crafted of soft yet durable high-quality quilted fabric, this tote features a roomy interior with one zippered pocket and two slip pockets, along with a zippered closure. A silver-tone charm showcasing the silhouette of Texas with a heart cutout adds a perfect finishing touch to this versatile dual-handle tote. Imported. *Item price: \$79.99, payable in 3 easy installments of \$26.66 each (plus a total of \$19.99 s + s*)*

3. Personalized Heart of Texas Women's Denim Jacket

Beautifully crafted of durable, medium-wash cotton-blend stretch denim, this jacket features a bold outline of the Lone Star State with bandana-inspired accents beneath a classic Western yoke—finished with the sentiment, "Forever a Texas Girl." A gold embroidered heart and white embroidered accents add to the look. The front of the jacket is personalized FREE with your monogram or full name (max 12 characters). Additional design details for this flattering and roomy jacket include two flap chest pockets with silver-tone button closures, two hip pockets, an adjustable hem and cuffs and a full button-front closure. Imported. Available in women's sizes S-3X. *Item price: \$149.99, payable in 4 easy installments of \$37.50 each (plus a total of \$19.99 s+s*) Add \$10 for sizes 1X-3X*

Order Today at bradfordexchange.com/ForeverTexas

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SEND NO MONEY NOW

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Yes! Please accept my order for the *Heart of Texas Item(s)* for me as described in this announcement.

STEP 1. Choose Your Products (and size, if applicable)

- 1. Heart of Texas Women's Hoodie 01-44509-001 Size _____
- 2. Heart of Texas Quilted Tote 01-44510-001
- 3. Personalized Heart of Texas Women's Denim Jacket 01-44612-001 Size _____

Jacket and Hoodie available in women's sizes Small (6-8) Medium (10-12) Large (14-16) XL (18) 1XL (20) 2XL (22) 3XL (24)

STEP 2. Add your name or initials FOR DENIM JACKET ONLY (Up to 12 characters MAX):

Check here if you do NOT want personalization

Signature _____

Mrs. Mr. Ms. _____

Name (Please Print Clearly)

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

E-mail _____

*See bradfordexchange.com for information on all that is included in your one-time shipping and service charge. Please allow 4-8 weeks after initial payment for shipment. Sales subject to product availability and order acceptance.

E54801



Go the Other Way

Eastern Central Texas' hill country also has plenty of wildflowers, rolling hills and history

BY W.F. STRONG • ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS WORMELL

A GREAT MANY TEXANS set off for the Hill Country to enjoy the splendor of the wildflowers over the past couple of months. The blooms light up the hills and roadsides with carpets of vibrant color.

But I want to suggest that you consider the other hill country, composed of a gentler, less dramatic topography—one that also offers wildflowers galore and winding roads but has the advantage of being far less traveled.

You start in the small eastern Central Texas hamlet of Clay, between Brenham and Bryan, on FM 50, heading south. Here, you will encounter the first hill rising off the flatlands into a changing ecosystem. You can see the gentle rise sweep across

the land like a stationary wave, from left to right.

Once you get into Independence, which changed its name from Cole's Settlement around 1836 to honor Texas' freedom from Mexico, take a right on FM 390 and stay on that road almost all the way to Burton.

This is a famous scenic drive that passes through the old ghost town of Gay Hill. Wildflowers are often bountiful here. From Burton, continue on U.S. Highway 290 for a few miles and pick up State Highway 237 to Round Top.

Round Top was part of Stephen F. Austin's original colony. The town took its name from an octagonal tower

TCP Listen as W.F. Strong narrates this story on our website.



constructed there in stagecoach days. Since the 1960s it's been known as a mecca for antique lovers. What I appreciate most about the road from Round Top to La Grange are the white fences that curve along emerald green pastures.

Once you get into La Grange on State Highway 159, you'll take a left on U.S. Highway 77, climb the big hill and head south out of town, crossing the Colorado River. La Grange is probably best known for the Chicken Ranch brothel, which ZZ Top and reporter Marvin Zindler made famous in the 1970s—or perhaps infamous. It's long gone, of course.

Just 4 miles down that road, you'll take a right on County Road 2436. Look to your left and, quite soon, you'll see the largest lawn mower graveyard you've ever seen. That's Keith's Lawnmower Repair. I'm not sure it's a good advertisement for Keith's skills, but maybe it's an endorsement of his genius as a seller of new mowers.

This road dead-ends into FM 609, where you'll take a left. Here, the hills get bigger and the wildflowers more robust.

Watch for a shed painted in the colors of the Texas flag, off to the left. It's magnificently situated among wildflowers—as if the shed is posing for you.

It won't be long before you will arrive in Flatonia, which isn't particularly flat (it was named for pioneer settler F.W. Flato). In Flatonia, pick up State Highway 95 headed south toward Shiner. On this stretch, you'll enjoy more rural roads, gentle hills and wildflowers, including panoramic views off to the west.

End your drive with a Shiner Bock at the oldest independent brewery in Texas. After a two-hour drive through wildflower country, you've earned a bock or two. ■

The Art of the Sandwich

Warm your heart with a meal dressed in layers

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

All my favorite things—brisket, butter, Texas toast and cheese— together in perfectly delicious harmony makes for one happy señorita. Whenever my husband cooks up a brisket, I always tuck away some in the freezer to whip up these sandwiches. Pair this sandwich with a glass of wine, an icy cold beer or a frozen margarita.

Brisket Grilled Cheese Sandwich

4 tablespoons (½ stick) butter, softened
4 slices thick-sliced white bread (often labeled Texas toast)
8 ounces sharp cheddar cheese, grated or sliced
16 ounces diced, cooked brisket, room temperature

1. Butter one side of each slice of bread.
2. On the unbuttered side of 2 bread slices, layer half the cheddar, brisket and other half of cheddar. Top with two remaining bread slices, butter side out, to make sandwiches.
3. Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat. Cook sandwiches 3–4 minutes on each side, or until both sides are golden brown.
4. Remove sandwiches from skillet, slice in half and serve warm.

SERVES 2

TCP Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in Cocina Gris at sweetlifebake.com, where she features a recipe for Mini Chorizo con Papa y Huevo Breakfast Sandwiches.





Grilled Strawnana Hazelnut Sandwich

LISA CASIMIR
COSERV

Grab a few napkins and get ready to sink your teeth into the sweetest twist on the classic PB&J. I love a peanut butter sammy, but the combination of berries and banana with chocolate hazelnut is everything I didn't know I needed!

1/3 cup chocolate hazelnut spread, such as Nutella
4 slices sourdough bread
1 cup strawberries, thinly sliced
2 bananas, thinly sliced
2 tablespoons (1/4 stick) butter

1. Spread hazelnut spread on one side of each slice of sourdough. Top two slices with strawberries. Top the other two slices with bananas.
2. Stack bread to make two sandwiches, pairing one strawberry-topped slice with one banana-topped slice, and evenly spread butter on each side of sandwiches.
3. Heat a skillet over medium-high heat. Cook sandwiches, covered, 3 minutes on each side, or until bread is lightly toasted.
4. Slice in half and serve warm.

SERVES 2

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 >



\$500 WINNER

Muffuletta

BETTY HERZIK
FAYETTE EC



A briny olive spread combines with a smorgasbord of cold cuts and cheese to create a mouth-watering BIG bite of a sandwich, and I am in love. The food processor does all the heavy lifting in this recipe, then the sandwich gets wrapped in foil and baked until warm. I cannot wait to make this sandwich again and again.

1 jar giardiniera (16 ounces), drained
1/2 of 10-ounce jar pimiento-stuffed Spanish queen olives, drained
1/2 of 10-ounce jar sliced Kalamata olives, drained

1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 loaf ciabatta bread, sliced horizontally
1/4 cup red wine vinegar
1 tablespoon dried oregano
8 ounces sliced Black Forest ham
4 ounces sliced hard salami
4 ounces sliced mortadella
8 ounces sliced provolone cheese

COOK'S TIP: The sandwich may be refrigerated overnight (wrapped in aluminum foil). If doing this, take it out of the refrigerator about 45 minutes before baking. Increase the baking time to 20–22 minutes.

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In a food processor, combine giardiniera, olives and oil and pulse until a uniform mixture forms. Brush both cut sides of bread with vinegar and sprinkle with oregano.
2. Place bottom half of the loaf on a piece of aluminum foil large enough to wrap around the entire sandwich. Layer meats and provolone on bread. Top with olive mixture. Place top half of bread on sandwich and wrap foil around sandwich.
3. Place wrapped sandwich on a baking sheet and bake 15–17 minutes, until thoroughly heated. Remove foil, slice into individual portions and serve.

SERVES 6

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

CRANBERRY HARVEST DUE JUN 10

Cranberries can add a tart fall touch to pastries, salads, drinks and desserts. Come November we'll share the best from Co-op Country and award \$500 for the top recipe.

UPCOMING: HOLIDAY TRADITIONS DUE JUL 10



Bridget's Sandwiches

LYNETT RATCHFORD
BLUEBONNET EC

These easy sandwiches have it all: sweet slices of ham, gooey Swiss cheese, and rolls that stay soft and fluffy on the inside with a perfectly toasted top. The secret is marinating them overnight in a savory butter sauce. They are delicious and a great dish for making in advance.

- 24 Hawaiian sweet rolls**
- 16 ounces sliced ham**
- 16 ounces sliced Swiss cheese**
- ½ cup (1 stick) butter**
- ½ teaspoon poppy seeds**
- 1 tablespoon minced onion**
- ½ teaspoon steak sauce**
- ½ tablespoon yellow mustard**

1. Slice rolls in half and arrange bottom halves in a baking dish. Layer with ham and Swiss. Place top halves of the rolls over cheese.
2. In a saucepan over medium-high heat,



melt butter. Add poppy seeds, onion, steak sauce and mustard and cook 1 minute. Pour mixture over sandwiches, spreading evenly.

3. Cover baking dish with aluminum foil and refrigerate overnight.
4. Preheat oven to 350 degrees and bake sandwiches, still covered by foil, 10 minutes. Remove foil and cook 10 minutes uncovered. Serve warm.

SERVES 6

Hacks for Your Stacks

Great sandwiches are all about high-quality ingredients and technique. Here are some secrets from my kitchen.

USE THOSE LEFTOVERS

Last night's shredded or roasted chicken or pork loin transform into a tasty lunch.

NO MAYO, NO PROBLEM

Pesto, ranch dip, hummus or sour cream with hot sauce can easily fill in for mayonnaise.

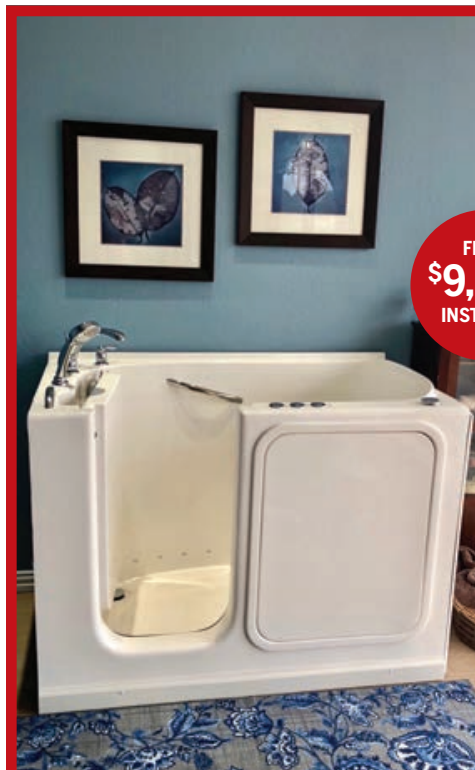
SEASON YOUR TOMATOES

Please! A little salt and pepper go a long way. And slice them with a serrated knife for the cleanest cut.

DON'T HOLD THE HERBS

Make your sandwich pop with a sprinkle of fresh dill, thyme or basil.

—Vianney Rodriguez



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COURTESY CASEY CHAPMAN ROSS

Play Time on the Prairie

The 'Fort Griffin Fandangle' is a spectacle like no other

BY CHET GARNER

I ARRIVED IN ALBANY, northeast of Abilene, just as the summer heat began to loosen its grip and the sky softened to a dusty pastel. I took my seat in the open-air Prairie Theater with 1,000 other folks who had all made the pilgrimage to witness the oldest outdoor musical in the state: the *Fort Griffin Fandangle*. The place was buzzing with anticipation, and I could see hundreds of costumed performers waiting in the ranks as saddled horses trotted offstage.

This was Albany's Super Bowl, and it was almost game time. Every year, a cast of 250 performers, horses, longhorns and a robotic snake rehearse for months in preparation for the last two weeks in June, when *Fandangle* takes the stage. The shows are June 19–20 and 26–27 this year.

The tradition goes back to 1938, when Robert Nail Jr., a high school teacher and amateur playwright, penned a musical about the history of Shackelford County. Nearly 90 years later, it's still going strong.

For the next few hours, I watched neighbors become pioneers, soldiers, ranchers and Comanche warriors, telling their collective story through songs, dance and a few gunfights. The narration carried us through settlement, struggle and celebration, but the real magic came from the sheer number of people involved—kids, parents, grandparents—sometimes three generations sharing the same spotlight.

There's something incredibly charming about knowing the singing cowboy or cancan dancer could be the local custodian, lawyer or barista. It was meaningful when it needed to be and at times completely ridiculous.

As the last song rang out across the prairie and the cast took their final bows, I felt like I had witnessed something deeply personal for Albany but also important for everyone. To quote its creator, Mr. Nail, "You can never be who you're supposed to be until you know who you've been." ■

ABOVE A cast of 200-plus stages the *Fort Griffin Fandangle* in Albany, continuing a tradition that goes back to 1938.

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

JUNE

10

Snyder [10–13] West Texas Western Swing Festival, (325) 573-3558, snyderchamber.org

11

Abilene [11–14] Children's Art + Literacy Festival, (325) 677-1161, abilenecalf.com

13

Fredericksburg Luckenbach School Open House, (830) 685-3321, historicschools.org

Jacksonville Tomato Fest, (903) 586-2217, jacksonvilletexas.com

Mason Hot Dog & Hot Rod Night, (325) 347-5758, mason.tx.org

Seguin [13–July 10] Red, White and Blue Art Show, (830) 305-0472, seguinartleague.com

Grapevine [13–August 30] Dinosaur Quest, (817) 410-3185, grapevinetexasusa.com

17

Fairfield Tea With Miss Texas, (903) 389-5792, fairfieldtexaschamber.com

18

Corsicana [18–21, 25–28] The Drowning Girls, (903) 872-5421, thewlac.com

20

Dallas Showtime Saturday: Hot Toast Music Company, (972) 702-7100, galleriadallas.com

Garland Juneteenth Celebration, (972) 205-2749, visitgarlandtx.com

Sherman Juneteenth Celebration, (469) 715-7471, bit.ly/shermanjuneteenth

23

Fort Worth [23-28] The Notebook, (817) 212-4280, basshall.com

25

Levelland [25-27] Golden Spread Classic, (806) 759-1102, goldenspreadclassic.com

27

Van Freedom Boom, (903) 963-7216, vantx.gov

JULY

3

Eagle Lake Freedom Festival, (979) 234-2640, coeltx.net

Fairfield Fireworks at the Fairgrounds, (903) 389-5792, fairfieldtexaschamber.com

Palestine [3-4] America 250: A Star-Spangled Jubilee, 1-800-659-3484, visitpalestine.com

Snyder [3-4] July 4th Celebration, (325) 573-3558, snyderchamber.org

4

Corsicana Freedom Fest, (903) 654-4850, visitcorsicana.com

Giddings Firemen's July 4th Celebration, (979) 542-3455, giddingstx.com

Lakehills Independence Day Parade, (830) 612-1034, bit.ly/post0410bbq

Point Blank America 250, (281) 757-0682, usa250-pb.com

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Upper Antelope Canyon, fine art giclée print, 2025, 12" x 19", Bobby Greeson

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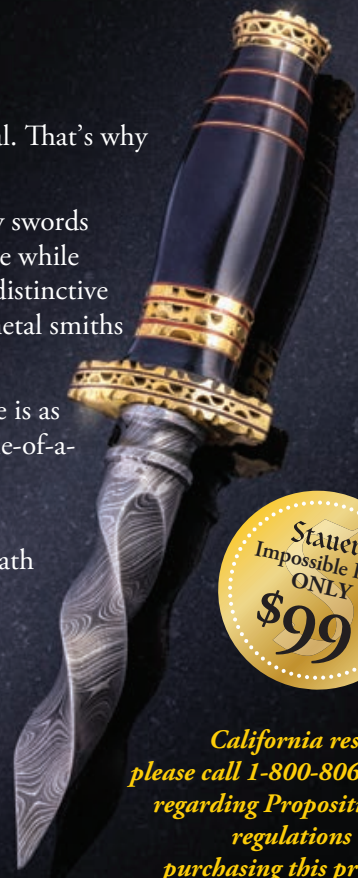
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1 RAY BEDNAR
BLUEBONNET EC
A painted bunting bathing.

2 FRANKI SALDIVAR
J-A-C EC
“I was able to photograph bears in Alaska in the fall of 2022.”

3 LAUREN MCCLAIN
PENTEX ENERGY
“Wild and free, this 4-year-old lives life to the fullest.”

4 PAUL GARCIA
MEDINA EC
“I just happened to catch this cardinal taking a bath in my home’s birdbath.”



Upcoming Contests

- TAILGATING** DUE JUN 10
- RIDE THE RAILS** DUE JUL 10
- CHRISTMAS FAILS** DUE AUG 10



ENTER ONLINE

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for many more Making a Splash photos from readers.



Papa Hits His Stride

Fatherhood becomes grand when you get a second go

BY MARK TROTH

ILLUSTRATION BY
URAN DUO

GENERATION GAPS CAN BE measured in years but also in opinions and outlooks.

And as parents continue a decades-long trend of having children later in life, I wonder what will become of the growing gap between grandchildren and their grandparents. After all, a 60-year age difference between a Baby Boomer and his grandkids (I was a child of the 1960s) is bound to create more difficulty in finding common ground.

My dad was a hardworking, principled man of few words and a strong code of ethics. I didn't challenge him often. Serious father-son conversations usually assured a quiet peace. Though as he aged, Dad mellowed, especially with my children. And now that I'm the next generational Papa, it all makes perfect sense to me.

After retiring in 2023, my wife, Mary, and I relocated to Washington County—just an hour commute to the grandkids. We touch base daily and get together often, but the most special times are when they visit us in Chappell Hill for holidays or long weekends.

With these extended stays, I can play the grandfather role 24/7 and share my pearls of wisdom, old jokes and timeless stories that are, of course, always new to them. My son and daughter just roll their eyes.

Not unlike my dad, I bring a renewed patience and tolerance to my grandkids that may have been a bit lacking with my own children. As a father, work pressure, financial obligations and just plain life often got in the way.

Now, we are second in line with regard to child-raising responsibility. Mary and I assist, advise, support, nourish, teach and console—but rarely mandate.

Ten years now into full grandparent mode, my elder wisdom serves me well. I'm the peacemaker between siblings and cousins, the answerer to boundless questions, the blocks and puzzles play partner on the floor (getting back up is the hard part), the safety foot on the Kubota pedal while they steer, the fishing partner who takes the perch off the hook, the positive "get 'em next time" coach, a second—perhaps more seasoned and sympathetic—ear when they're troubled, and any other role that needs filling.

Yet I must be cautious to always support and respect my son's and daughter's parental initiatives.

If there is a generational gap with our grandchildren, Mary and I have bridged it with a circle of life and love. It is a second chance for Papa and Mimi to get it right.

It's been said, "Dearer than our children are the children of our children." Is there anything more grand than that? ■



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