

TEXAS CO-OP POWER
OCTOBER 2024

CECA'S 86TH ANNUAL MEETING



CECA

**You're Invited to
Your Annual Meeting
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10TH
AT 6 P.M.
CECA HEADQUARTERS
COMANCHE, TEXAS
JOIN US FOR GREAT
PRIZES AND FOOD!**



TO THE MEMBER ADDRESSED:

You are hereby given official notice that the annual meeting of CECA will be held at the cooperative's headquarters at 6 p.m. Thursday, October 10, in Comanche.

At the meeting, one member each from District 1 and District 7 is to be elected as director for a three-year term, and other business that might come before the meeting may be discussed.

We urge you to be present for this meeting Thursday, October 10, 2024, at 6 p.m. at CECA's headquarters.

Registration begins at 5:45 p.m. and will close when the call for the vote is made.

Ruby Solomon
Secretary/Treasurer





THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2024
CECA HQ | 349 INDUSTRIAL BLVD.
COMANCHE

5:45 P.M. REGISTRATION
6 P.M. DINNER
6:30 P.M. BUSINESS MEETING

MEMBER REGISTRATION CARD

TEAR OFF THIS CARD AND BRING IT WITH YOU TO YOUR ANNUAL MEETING.

THIS IS YOUR REGISTRATION CARD AND TICKET FOR DOOR PRIZES.

5:45 P.M. REGISTRATION

6 P.M. REFRESHMENTS AND DINNER

6:30 P.M. CALL TO ORDER

INVOCATION

INTRODUCTION OF DIRECTORS AND
SPECIAL GUEST

REPORT OF OFFICERS

REPORT ON QUORUM

READING OF NOTICE, PROOF OF
PUBLICATION

ELECTION OF DIRECTORS

MANAGER'S REPORT

ELECTION JUDGE'S REPORT

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

DRAWING FOR DOOR PRIZES

ADJOURN



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CECA HQ | 349 INDUSTRIAL BLVD.
COMANCHE

5:45 P.M. REGISTRATION
6 P.M. DINNER
6:30 P.M. BUSINESS MEETING

MEMBER REGISTRATION CARD

TEAR OFF THIS CARD AND BRING IT WITH YOU TO YOUR ANNUAL MEETING.

THIS IS YOUR REGISTRATION CARD AND TICKET FOR DOOR PRIZES.

THE RESULTS OF THE DISTRICT MEETINGS TO NOMINATE CANDIDATES FOR THE BOARD WERE AS FOLLOWS:

DISTRICT 1



RANDY DENNING

The District 1 meeting was held July 11 at the CECA headquarters in Comanche. Although attendance did not meet the required quorum of 15 member families, in accordance with CECA's bylaws, incumbent Randy Denning was nominated as the candidate from District 1.

DISTRICT 7



PHIL TAYLOR

The District 7 meeting was held July 25 at Gunsight Baptist Church near Breckenridge. Although the attendance did not meet the required quorum of 15 member families, in accordance with CECA's bylaws, incumbent Phil Taylor was nominated as the candidate from District 7.

A RECAP OF THE DISTRICT MEETINGS
CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 18.

THE WORLD
AS A CLASSROOM

THE INTRIGUING
FLAPPER BANDIT

LA PITADA
AND THE COWBOYS

Texas Coop Power

FOR CECA MEMBERS

OCTOBER 2024

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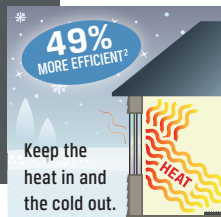
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October 2024



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06 Grassroots Movement

Yard work doesn't cut it for the dedicated drivers and DIYers of lawn mower racing.

Story and Photos by Julia Robinson

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College professors are taking students way out of the classroom for educational adventures.

By Pam LeBlanc

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ON THE COVER
Jay Jones of College Station hurtles around a track in Gun Barrel City in his souped-up mower.
Photo by Julia Robinson

ABOVE
Texas Tech University student Kassidy Edwards hikes her bike out of Fresno Canyon in Big Bend Ranch State Park.
Photo by Jerod Foster



Latin America Celebrates

EVER WONDER WHY National Hispanic Heritage Month, commemorated each September 15–October 15, spans two calendar months?

The celebration begins in the middle of September to coincide with independence days in several Latin American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua celebrate theirs September 15, followed by Mexico on September 16, Chile on September 18 and Belize on September 21. The month also overlaps with Día de la Raza, a Latin American holiday that for some replaces Columbus Day, October 12, to celebrate the region's mixed Indigenous and European heritage.



Night Vision

Lago Vista, a community nestled along Lake Travis in Central Texas, made history 65 years ago this month. The town, northwest of Austin, became the first rural community in the U.S. to get streetlights, October 20, 1959, thanks to Pedernales Electric Cooperative.



TCP Contests and More

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FOCUS ON TEXAS PHOTOS

I Love

RECOMMENDED READING

Read *Wiley's Sages* from December 2013 to learn more about the undisputably mighty Wiley College debate team. Melvin B. Tolson organized the team 100 years ago this month, October 28, 1924.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

My favorite hand-me-down is ...

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

Here are some of the responses to our August prompt: **I can't wait to learn ...**

How to quilt. Katie Phillips' story has inspired me [*In the Beginning*, August 2024]. It's never too late.

JANET KELLY
BLUEBONNET EC
ELGIN

How to make tamales from scratch.

JENNY CARPENTER
CENTRAL TEXAS EC
INGRAM

Something new every day so I don't grow old.

KATHY BOLSEN
PEDERNALES EC
SPRING BRANCH

About the world from my great-grandchildren.

KAT CROSS
HOUSTON COUNTY EC
CROCKETT

Visit our website to see more responses.

AUGUST 2024 Open Roads, Open Eyes

“Beautiful pictures and a great story. Texas does have wonderful scenery and vistas. We all need to slow down and see what’s out there.”

MARY HENDERSON HARP
VIA FACEBOOK



WYATT MCSPADEN

Getting Electricity

I was born in 1944 and raised on a farm in southwest Iowa [*In the Beginning*, August 2024]. We did not get power until 1947 or 1948. Our house was wired for electricity, but all progress toward lighting up the homes stopped when the war started.

We had the light switches, which, of course, did nothing, and my mom would tell me that I played with those switches so much, she wondered if they would still work when we actually did get power. Lucky for me they did.

Sheryl S. McNally
Pedernales EC
Marble Falls

Dimmitt, Darn It

Having grown up in Earth, the photo on Page 8 caught my eye [*Open Roads, Open Eyes*; August 2024]. I don’t recall silage mounds back in the 1950s, but I do recall Dimmitt being spelled with two T’s.

Evelyn McAnelly
Medina EC
Hondo

Earthy Elocution

Lyndon B. Johnson could be earthy in his language at times, and many jokes and stories wouldn’t be suitable for a family magazine [*Sense and Humor*, August 2024].

One of the milder anecdotes involved a crisis in Greek politics between Prime Minister Georgios Papandreou and his son and political opponent Andreas Papandreou. LBJ called the Greek ambassador in to urge the Greeks to get their act together.

LBJ, who wasn’t good at lengthy foreign names, told the ambassador, “You tell old Papa-what’s-his-name to get together with that other Papa-what’s-his-name and work something out.”

Charles Wukasch
Pedernales EC
Austin

Required Reading

Finish This Sentence in the August issue hit a chord. Elmer Kelton’s books are classic, and the one noted, *The Time It Never Rained*, is a must-read.

Charles Patterson
Navarro County EC
Corsicana

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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

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

Texas Co-op Power

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CORBIS | GETTY IMAGES

GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT

Yard work doesn't cut it
for the dedicated drivers and
DIYers of lawn mower racing





STORY AND PHOTOS BY JULIA ROBINSON

After first responders rushed over to Bobby Lechinger, who was face down on the dirt track after flipping his lawn mower, they tended to his injuries, including a fractured foot.

But Lechinger still had his eyes on a prize.

“Please don’t cut my racing pant leg,” the mower racer from Madisonville told the ambulance crew. “I have to race tomorrow.”

Lawn mower racing may sound like a joke, but the drivers are seriously dedicated to their sport.

With four wheels (mostly on the ground), cutting blades removed and a low center of gravity, lawn mower racing doesn’t make for many crashes, but it can still be dangerous. On this hot June morning in Gun Barrel City, southeast of Dallas, Lechinger was among a dozen drivers hurtling around a small dirt oval track tucked between baseball fields and a Baptist church. This is the home track for the Lone Star Mower Racing Association and for an unexpected blend of grassroots engineering, adrenaline-fueled competition, light-hearted humor and Texas grit.

The competitors don full-body motocross-style racing suits and safety gear and push their minuscule home-built machines to the edge. With the temperature pushing into the mid-90s before racing even starts, everyone is sweating but smiling. A small but curious crowd has filled the bleachers, some huddling under umbrellas for relief from the intense sunshine. As the green flag waves, the competitors roar across the starting line, and the dirt flies.

Lawn mower racing traces its origins, as you might expect, to a laugh in a bar.

In 1973, Irishman Jim Gavin and a group of his mates from West Sussex, in England, were bemoaning the increasing cost of motor sports, with sponsorships and professional drivers pushing out everyday enthusiasts. But they realized they all owned lawn mowers and decided to race them. Eighty competitors showed up for that first gathering of the British Lawn Mower Racing Association.

CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE Kevin Council, a “horsepower junkie,” raced dirt bikes for 20 years before discovering lawn mower racing. Annsley Howard, with her dad, John, has been racing mowers since she was 9. Richard Wooley holds off Jesse Vick during the U.S. Lawn Mower Racing Association national finals in June in Gun Barrel City. Family, friends and curiosity seekers find the action way more exciting than watching grass grow.



Lawn mower racing embodies the spirit of Texas itself: bold, resilient and unapologetically fun.

In the U.S., there's an annual lawn mower race in Indiana that started in 1963, and there had been a few one-off races over the years at county fairs and rodeo sideshows. But nothing was formalized until 1992, when STA-BIL, an engine fuel additives brand, announced a publicity stunt on April Fool's Day: the first U.S. Lawn Mower Racing Association competition.

The promotion was a surprising success and 32 years on, lawn mower racing is still finding new fans and competitors, attracting racers from other motor sports drawn to the affordability and do-it-yourself engineering.

The Texas chapter—the Lone Star Mower Racing Association—formed in 1998, with a racing season that runs from roughly Labor Day to Memorial Day, skipping the hottest months when engine (and driver) performance suffers. Boerne, Bonham, Bulverde, Caldwell, Madisonville, Whitesboro and Wortham also host races and exhibitions. The rules are fairly simple: remove the cutting blades, build your mower to regulation rules and go faster than everyone else.

At its core, lawn mower racing is a celebration of ingenuity and resourcefulness. With strict regulations governing engine size and modifications, racers must get creative to gain a competitive edge. Each mower is a testament to its owner's craftsmanship and dedication.

There are eight classes of competition based on engine size, horsepower, wheelbase and other specs. Kids as young as 6 can compete with stock mowers (6.5 horsepower or less) and top speeds around 20 mph. The fastest classes are the factory experimental classes—the Formula 1 of mowers—with FXS (single cylinder) and FXT (twin cylinder) machines that can exceed 100 mph.

Kevin Council, president of the LSMRA and a member of Houston County Electric Cooperative, competes in the fastest FXT class. Dressed in a red, white and blue NASCAR-style suit, Council greets me in front of his travel trailer, home to four mowers. He spent 20 years racing dirt bikes before retiring from the sport.

He saw his first LSMRA race in 2021, and “before the race



ABOVE Philip Fallis of Willis chats with fans after a race. OPPOSITE Council says he saw his first race in 2021 and “before the race was even over, I was on the internet looking for a mower.”

was even over, I was on the internet looking for a mower. Two weeks later we drove to Michigan to pick it up, and that was four lawn mowers ago,” Council says with a laugh. “I’m a horsepower junkie at heart, and there’s nothing more redneck than going lawn mower racing.”

He jokes that his racing number, 12K, is the start-up cost for his new racing habit but is quick to point out how accessible and affordable lawn mowers are compared to other motor sports. “This is really one of the cheapest sports you can get into horsepowerwise. The entry level is probably \$1,000–\$1,500.”

Lawn mower racing thrives on the participation of everyday Texans who have formed and foster a tightly knit community of gearheads. There’s more camaraderie than cutthroat competition. Sure, racers are eager to win, but they’re just as likely to lend a helping hand to a fellow competitor. In the pits, racers swap tips, share tools and forge lasting friendships. There are no cash prizes in the sport—just trophies and bragging rights.





Back on the track, competitors have started the feature races, which have been shortened to 15 laps instead of the usual 20 due to the heat.

Brandi Vercher from Highlands is one of three women racing today and takes her first checkered flag after years of coming in second and third place in the GPT class.

Annsley Howard, 17, from New Ulm, takes first in the FXS class on her machine painted black and green. Howard, the 2023 state champion in the FXS class, has been racing since she was 9. “It’s just fun. It’s an adrenaline rush,” she says with a smile.

Her father, John Howard, got involved with racing when a friend asked for help from his welding shop. “Two and a half weeks later, I built a mower that I couldn’t even fit on,” John says. “I had to get someone else to drive it. And then it just snowballed from there.”

Lots of drivers have a story like this, in which a friend or family member enticed them into the sport. Sammie Neel, LSMRA secretary-treasurer and a customer of Bryan Texas Utilities, also races in the FXS class. “I like to say we’ve been ruining lawns since 1992!”

Neel’s husband got into the sport first, then warmed her onto the track.

“Whenever I finally got out there, I was going slow,” she says, drawing out the word “slow.” “I got lapped like five times, and I was so mad when I got off the track, I said, ‘You make that sucker go. If I’m going to be out here, I’m racing.’”

Then she couldn’t stop. “You think you’re just going to go out there and putt around, but once—and I mean once—somebody passes you, you’re like, ‘Ahh, I’m ready to go!’”

The timekeeper and scoring judge today is Kerry Evans, the USLMRA president, who drove in from Alabama. He’s been in the sport since 1998 and has two national championships.

“When we started in the ’90s, we had 30- and 40-mph lawn mowers,” Evans says. “People started experimenting and tinkering, and in September of 2010, a group of us went to the Bonneville Salt Flats and set the land-speed record on the lawn mower at 96½ miles an hour.”

Today’s FXT mowers can surpass 100 mph. “It’s just been rock and mow ever since,” Evans says.

The spirit of the sport’s April Fool’s origin has never left, and many early racers had punny monikers: Sir Lawns A Lot, the Lawn Ranger, Blade Runner, Prograssinator. These days everyone runs under their actual names, but the sport still gets chuckles.

“We tell people, hey, we race lawn mowers, and they’ll just start laughing,” Neel says. “And we’re like, seriously, you know, laugh if you want, but come out to the races because they go fast.”

“And then once they come out, they get excited. They’re a fan after that.”

Lawn mower racing embodies the spirit of Texas itself: bold, resilient and unapologetically fun. As long as there are lawns to mow and racers with a need for speed, the roar of mowers will continue to remind us that, sometimes, the most extraordinary adventures can be found in the most unexpected places.

“The mow, the merrier,” Evans says. ■

College professors are taking students
way out of the classroom for educational adventures

LEARNING *the* HARD WAY

BY PAM LEBLANC

SOME OF THE MOST important lessons of college didn't come in a classroom for Thira Schlegel. They came during a 10-day trip to Tanzania in January, when the Southwestern University senior and 11 other students climbed to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro.

During the trip, part of the university's Outdoor Adventure Program, Schlegel befriended a Tanzanian porter, a young man named Good Luck, who, like her, is an artist. Arriving in camp after difficult days of hiking at high elevations, Schlegel would unpack her art supplies and take in the rugged surroundings.

"I'd find a spot that inspired me and invite Good Luck to join," Schlegel says. "We painted the same scene together, sometimes in silence and sometimes talking about our lives and how they're similar and different."

That experience, Schlegel says, made her realize the privilege she has at home in Texas and inspired a series of paintings that incorporate themes of sustainability and adventure.

It also gave her confidence she'll carry with her the rest of her life.

TOP OF THE CLASS

Schlegel and the others' ascension of Kilimanjaro, which at 19,341 feet is the tallest peak in Africa, was part of a program led by mountaineer Brannndon Bargo. He's Southwestern's assistant director for outdoor adventure and executive producer and host of *The Highpointers*, a PBS series about Bargo and his brother, Greg, climbing the highest peaks in all 50 states.

The trip capped a year of shorter excursions that included mountain biking, kayaking, horseback riding and caving—all designed to help students feel more comfortable outdoors, find community and hone their leadership skills along the way.

"We want them to have fun but learn something," Brannndon Bargo says of the extracurricular program, which he hopes will eventually become a for-credit class at the



ABOVE Southwestern University student Thira Schlegel, left, with Good Luck, a Tanzanian porter she befriended on her trip to Africa. OPPOSITE Members of Southwestern's Outdoor Adventure Program at the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro.

university in Georgetown, north of Austin.

Baylor University, Texas A&M University, the University of Texas at Austin and other campuses also offer various forms of outdoor activities to round out their students' education.

"It's a way to retain students," Bargo says. "During COVID, we learned kids get really stressed out. They need a way to have community and find friends and de-stress. The university realizes this is a way to do that—and get students outdoors. They're putting an emphasis on it and money toward it."





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Anna DesHotels, a student in Texas Tech University's Adventure Media course, splashes through a muddy stretch of the Brazos River during a training ride. Tech's Jacob Hoebelheinrich, left, and Ryan Steele pitch a tent in Big Bend Ranch State Park. Tech students gather along a ridge overlooking the Madrid Falls watershed in the park.



RESPECTING THE UNEXPECTED

At Texas Tech University, students in the Adventure Media class, offered in the spring semester, bicycled 100 miles through the rugged canyons and cactus-studded plateaus of West Texas this year, gathering video and photos and collecting scientific data to create a three-part YouTube series about desert botanicals.

Jerod Foster co-teaches the program, created in 2014 and originally geared toward students interested in working in outdoor media. Today it's offered as an elective to students in all majors, but they must apply and interview for a spot.

"About half the class are folks interested in media production and storytelling, and the other half are folks from engineering, business, arts and humanities who are interested in a unique experience that lets them dive into areas their majors don't let them focus on," Foster says.

The signature experience of each session is a bike backpacking trip during spring break. Last year students biked 150 miles through New Mexico. This year's class pedaled 100 miles through prickly Big Bend Ranch State Park, along the Rio Grande.

"The primary takeaway is for them to get a very real-world taste of what it's like to go into the field as a professional and work through an incredibly intense challenge, then get to the other side and produce a quality project," Foster says. "They grow in confidence and resilience, both physically and mentally. They become a lot more aware of the purpose they are driving themselves toward."

It's something that today's students, whether they realize it or not, are craving, says Foster, who's also a prolific travel and nature photographer. "They want to be pushed out of

their comfort zone. This lets them experience a reality that's not augmented, and that's a precious commodity."

Such programs might look and feel foreign compared to the traditional classroom experience, but—particularly post-pandemic—institutions that are not adopting such immersive, hands-on experiences are getting left behind, Foster says.

"Students learn incredibly well in these settings," he says. "We need more of these things. They're not for everybody. We've had to deal with concussions and crashes. Some of these students have never ridden a bike before this class, and we don't go to adventure-light locations."

But students learn what not to sweat and how to deal with the unexpected.

"They have to be adaptive," Foster says. "We tell them, 'This is not going to go the way you imagined it, and that's OK.' It makes for great experience."

And that, perhaps, is the most important lesson of all.



PHOTOS COURTESY JEROD FOSTER

UPHILL ONE WAY

At Southwestern, 82 students applied for the Kilimanjaro trip. Bargo whittled it down to a dozen, looking for people interested not only in the physical challenge but those who wanted to learn about other cultures too. It wasn't easy, but ultimately all 12 students reached the summit.

"We had cold rain every day, even though it wasn't rainy season," Bargo says. "They did well as the trip started, but as they passed 14,000 feet, nearly everyone struggled. One of the greatest things was seeing how they rose to the occasion and helped each other."

The students arrived quiet, nervous and unfamiliar with one another but returned talking and laughing. "It gives them a sense of place and community," Bargo says. "It helps them learn who they are and builds perseverance and determination."

GETTING OFF-CAMPUS

Other outdoor adventure programming at Texas universities:

Baylor University's Outdoor Adventure Living-Learning Community offers a for-credit adventure sport class that includes climbing, mountain biking and outdoor living.

Texas A&M University offers about 15 climbing, paddling, hiking and camping trips each year through its Outdoor Adventures program.

Texas State University's mass communication department offers a for-credit Mobile Storytelling in the Outdoors course. Students use smartphones and other mobile tools to produce video and social content.

The University of Texas' Outdoor Recreation program offers trips each semester. Past excursions have included canoeing Buffalo National River in Arkansas and backpacking in Hawaii.

For Schlegel, who graduated in May, the adventure marked her first trip overseas.

"I went to Kilimanjaro and saw how big the world truly is," she says. "It was the hardest thing I've ever done."

But besides instilling confidence, it inspired new themes in her artwork.

"I read about how shoes are such a big contributor to our carbon footprint," she says. "I got the idea to cut up old running shoes to use the sole and fabric to imprint onto landscape paintings."

Schlegel gathered pieces of running shoes she found while inching her way up the mountain. The porters often wear shoes given to them by hikers and use them until they fall apart. She dipped those bits of rubber soles—still with dirt on them—into paint and pressed them onto landscapes to imprint a metaphorical carbon footprint onto her paintings.

"It allowed my artwork to carry a totally different meaning, even deeper than it was before," she says. "I realize we need to sustain the things we have for as long as we can and be grateful for all the gear we use and use it sustainably."

Schlegel says she hopes to donate proceeds from some of her Kilimanjaro-inspired work to an organization that supports the porters or an elementary school in Africa.

"My mindset has totally changed after this trip. I have this yearning to give back." ■

Myth Busting with Geothermal Heat Pumps

by Brian Shaw, Texas Territory Manager
WaterFurnace

“Well, you could have a geothermal heat pump, but...”

...You Need a Bunch of Land

As one old timer put it, “If you have a lawn mower, then I can put in a geo unit.” With numerous options for the underground loop systems, that’s actually true. A vertical loop is often installed under driveways or even 10’ x 10’ patches of ground. There are many other options including using an existing water well, a pond, or if in fact you have more than ½ an acre, a long horizontal ditch is a great solution. If you Google “ground heat exchanger options” you will find a variety of solutions that might work for you.

...It Isn’t Safe

Since geothermal heat pumps are 100% electrical, there is no combustion of gas or oil in the home for heating. So, there’s no chance of smelly fumes, explosions, or carbon monoxide poisoning. Because heat pumps are certified by independent laboratories, they include safety cutoff switches for every circuit in the system.



A geothermal unit easily integrates into your current heating and cooling system.



When using a geothermal unit, about 75% of the heating and cooling energy comes from the earth.

...Electric Heat is Expensive to Operate

Some geo systems are installed with electric strip heat for extreme cold weather. And yes, that can add to your electric bill. However, modern systems are designed to operate without backup heat down to extremely low temperatures. And if your underground system (the “loop”) is sized right, no backup heat is needed at all.

...It’s Too Expensive to Install

Installing geothermal heating and

cooling for your home or building is an investment, no doubt about it.

Geo system owners quickly realize their systems are saving so much money they are recouping their investments in 5-7 years. With the 30% tax credit and other incentives geo can even cost less than a new boiler or HVAC system to install. When you consider the loop will outlive anyone alive today and the heat pump will deliver twice the useful life of most alternatives, that makes for a much more attractive investment.

State of Texas

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MESSAGE
FROM
GENERAL
MANAGER

ALAN
LESLEY

October Is National Cooperative Month

Why we celebrate our unique business model

EVERY OCTOBER, cooperatives from all sectors across the country celebrate National Cooperative Month to recognize the cooperative difference and remind you, the members of our co-op, about CECA's purpose.

I must admit that occasionally, I have been somewhat cynical of PR "holidays" that fill up social media, but National Cooperative Month has a genuinely special purpose that's near and dear to me.

This month is all about celebrating co-ops' unique business model, based on the Seven Cooperative Principles: Voluntary and Open Membership; Democratic Member Control; Members' Economic Participation; Autonomy and Independence; Education, Training and Information; Cooperation Among Cooperatives; and Concern for Community.

For co-op employees and members who are familiar with the principles, the month of October is a great opportunity to renew our connection to each other and the purpose of our co-op. CECA's purpose is to improve the quality of life for our members by providing safe and reliable electricity.

We enhance this mission by offering many valuable programs and services to our members such as energy efficiency consulting, community outreach through our Operation Round-Up Program and alternative power solutions like solar, battery and standby generator sales.

Our cooperative business model ensures that

above all else, service will remain the core value of this organization.

In the U.S., there are more than 30,000 co-ops in many industries. These diverse yet connected businesses join together this month to educate members—and nonmembers—about the community of cooperatives.

There are more co-ops in our local community than most people realize. Co-ops are even represented on the shelves at our local grocery stores, such as Land O'Lakes, Welch's, Organic Valley, Cabot Creamery, Sunkist, Ocean Spray and more.

In fact, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, co-ops count more than 350 million members in the U.S. alone (with some folks belonging to multiple co-ops), and co-ops employ more than 2 million Americans and generate more than \$700 billion in annual revenue.

The Seven Cooperative Principles speak to the heart of why we must take every opportunity to celebrate and teach others about the cooperative business model. So plan your own co-op celebration by purchasing co-op products, doing business with co-ops right here in our community and being an active member of CECA.

One of the best ways to support us and the co-op business model is to attend our upcoming annual meeting October 10.

We look forward to seeing you there. ■



DEJAN DUNDJERSKI | ISTOCK.COM

CECA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



District 1:
Randy Denning



District 2:
Pete McDougal



District 3:
Ruby Solomon



District 4:
Monty Carlisle



District 5:
Troy Stewart



District 6:
Loren Stroebe



District 7:
Phil Taylor



TOP ROW: District 1 attendees, from left, Larry Ratliff with his fan, Allen and Susan Wiess with their air fryer, and Debra Green with her drill. **BOTTOM ROW:** District 7 attendees, from left, William Parker with his air fryer, Wendell Tipton with his drill and Synde Harris with her fan.

District 1, 7 Members Meet

CECA MEMBERS from districts 1 and 7 met at their respective locations to hear an update on how their cooperative is performing and to nominate their preferred candidates for the general election at the cooperative's 86th annual meeting scheduled for 6 p.m. October 10.

The gathering of District 1 members July 11 at the CECA Headquarters in Comanche did not reach the required quorum of 15 member families. As a result, according to the cooperative's bylaws, incumbent Randy Denning will be the sole nominee on the ballot for the election at the upcoming annual meeting.

Similarly, the District 7 meeting held July 25 at Gunsight Baptist Church also did not meet the quorum requirement. Therefore, incumbent Phil Taylor, who sought renomination to the board of directors, will be included on the ballot for the election at the annual meeting October 10.

These meetings also provided an opportunity for Alan Lesley, CECA general manager, to inform members about cost projections for CECA's four-year construction work plan. He shared that the cooperative is analyzing a cost-of-service study to assess whether rates can support the proposed work plan and cover the ongoing fixed costs associated with providing electric service.

The proposed plan that the CECA board is reviewing includes providing new metered

services to an estimated 1,232 new members, constructing an estimated 51 miles of power lines and replacing approximately 2,500 meters, 250 cross arms and 2,000 power poles across CECA's service area.

All of these projects would impact CECA's fixed costs to provide reliable and safe service. Due to rising material and labor costs, the total estimated budget for these projects is anticipated to be about \$28 million over the next four years.

A cost-of-service study is being done concurrently to ensure CECA rates appropriately support forecasted power costs along with the proposed 2025–29 work plan. The study examines the cooperative's current operational costs and estimates the necessary revenue to sustain operations and future planning.

While the results of the study were not yet available at the time of the meetings, Lesley expects to receive them soon and will present the findings to the CECA Board of Directors and, if necessary, begin the process of communicating a rate adjustment before the end of the year, based on the study's findings.

If you have any questions about the work plan, please contact us by emailing memberservices@ceca.coop or call our office line at 1-800-915-2533. ■

CECA Offers Residential Solar Solutions for Members

DID YOU KNOW CECA installs and sells solar power arrays? We have trained professionals who can evaluate your electricity use and property to provide the perfect fit for your home or business based on your usage patterns. We encourage members to include CECA in their solar array installation plans from start to finish.

CECA offers various options, from backup generators and battery systems to roof- and ground-mount arrays. Energy efficiency has progressed with new technologies, allowing members to take a more active role in optimizing their energy consumption. We're beyond the days of just turning off the lights or adjusting the thermostat when leaving the house.

If you're interested in optimizing your household's energy consumption, call Riley Hilliard at 1-800-915-2533 to set up a free energy audit and solar power analysis. Solar power may not be a good fit for everyone, but under the right circumstances, it can save CECA members money on their monthly bills.

There are many companies out there mar-

keting the installation of solar panel arrays in every county CECA serves, and this has created confusion around solar buyback plans and raised concerns about fair pricing in a new and changing industry.

We're here to help our members navigate this confusion, and if they feel solar may be a good option for them, we can handle the sale and installation as well.

CECA does require that an application process be completed before interconnection with our system to ensure proper safety, liability and metering standards are met. Regardless of the solar power vendor you choose, please contact us before you start your project to be sure that your plans are compliant and that your project goes smoothly.

You can always discuss your solar project plans with CECA staff for general information or specific needs. Solar power can be a great energy efficiency tool, and we applaud our members who are working to conserve power.

Call us at 1-800-915-2533 to learn more about how we can help. ■



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2023 ALLOCATION FACTORS



CECA Allocates Capital Credits

AS EACH YEAR comes to a close, CECA allocates capital credits to the accounts of members.

Cooperatives determine each year's margins accumulated from operations and allocate those margins to members' accounts, after all expenditures are paid and based on each member's usage.

These capital credits will be returned to members in the future in the form of estate returns or general returns when doing so will not weaken the financial condition of the cooperative, as determined by CECA's board of directors.

In the meantime, the funds are invested in the cooperative plant and credited to each member's account, even if the member moves out of our service territory. That's why it's important for member families departing our service territory to inform CECA of address changes, so capital credits can be returned and not go uncollected when the board approves a distribution.

2023 Allocation Factors

Residential: 0.06349641

Single-Phase General Service: 0.07656129

Three-Phase General Service: 0.05865085

Capital credits for 2023 were calculated by multiplying each member's bill by the allocation factors listed above. For example, if your total annual residential bill from the co-op—consisting of energy billing and power cost adjustment—was \$500, multiply that amount by 0.06349641, so the product is \$31.75. In calculating your total bill, include any security light charge but do not include any tax, service or miscellaneous charges.

If you have any questions concerning these calculations, please feel free to contact the co-op office at 1-800-915-2533.

This article is intended to serve as an official notice of allocation of capital credits for 2023. ■

Ignite Your Child’s Love for Reading With Free Books

CECA’S OPERATION ROUND-UP is bringing the magic of reading to your doorstep with Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library—just for the children of CECA members!

Imagine your little ones’ excitement when they receive a brand-new, high-quality book, personalized with their name, delivered straight to your home every month. That’s the joy the Imagination Library brings to children around the world, and now it’s available right here in our community.

This isn’t just any book program—it’s a special gift that helps your child explore new worlds, one page at a time. From birth to age 5, your child can enjoy a handpicked book,

selected by childhood literacy experts, with tips to make reading time even more fun and interactive. Plus, each year, two of these books will be bilingual, in Spanish and English, helping your child discover the joy of language learning.

And here’s the best part: it’s completely free for all kids younger than 5 in CECA’s service area.

Don’t let this amazing opportunity pass by. Sign up your child today and start building a library of memories together.

Visit CECA’s Imagination Library signup page at ceca.coop/imagination-library or scan the QR code below to get started. ■



Scan Here to Sign Up



DOLLY PARTON'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY

GOVERNMENT-IN-ACTION YOUTH TOUR



Scan Here to Apply!



Applications Open for 2025 CECA Government-in-Action Youth Tour

SURROUNDED BY iconic American landmarks in Washington, D.C., 147 Texas students and 19 chaperones embarked on a life-changing journey June 16–23 as part of the Government-in-Action Youth Tour, sponsored by electric cooperatives across the state.

The Youth Tour, inspired by then-Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson in 1957, allows students to experience firsthand what the American flag symbolizes by visiting our nation's capital on an all-expenses-paid trip. Since its inception, this program has impacted more than 50,000 students nationwide.

Initially, Texas cooperatives sent students to work in Sen. Johnson's office during the summer. The program then evolved into a coordinated trip by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association in 1964, bringing together students from across the country.

Today, more than 1,500 students participate annually, learning about American history, government and the role of electric cooperatives in their communities.

This year, CECA sponsored two local students, Allie Head from Blanket High School and Eli Pallette from Early High School, who earned their spots by submitting essays and participating in interviews with a panel of cooperative representatives.

CECA is currently accepting applications for the 2025 Youth Tour. If you're a sophomore or junior in high school and have a passion for history, please apply at ceca.coop/government-action-youth-tour or scan the QR code above.

If you have questions about the trip, please reach out to Triston McGehee at 1-800-915-2533 or email memberservices@ceca.coop. ■

CECA Awards \$16K to Area Students

CECA RECENTLY AWARDED \$16,000 in scholarships to area students. Kaylan Kiser and Pierson Sorrells each received a \$2,000 scholarship and Ethan Palette and Gage Parker each received \$1,000 from CECA Operation Round-Up. Henslie Hohertz, Emily Hughitt, Kylee Land, William Prochaska and Anna Rasberry each received a \$2,000 scholarship from CECA. Congratulations to all of the recipients.



HENSLIE HOHERTZ
SCHOLARSHIP FOR
EXCELLENCE



EMILY HUGHITT
SCHOLARSHIP FOR
EXCELLENCE



KYLEE LAND
SCHOLARSHIP FOR
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Loren Stroebel, District 6
Phil Taylor, District 7

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.

CECA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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

Spare Change Helps Our Communities

SINCE 2003, CECA's Operation Round-Up has empowered our members to create lasting change by rounding up their monthly bills to the nearest dollar. These small contributions, averaging just \$6 a year, accumulate into a powerful fund that supports individuals and organizations across CECA's service area.

Your rounded-up amount will appear as the Operation Round-Up line item on your monthly statement. Joining is easy—simply scan the QR code on the next page, call 1-800-915-2533, or email us at memberservices@ceca.coop. You can opt out at any time by contacting us.

Who We Help

Operation Round-Up's purpose is to donate to local organizations, projects and individuals in need. To qualify, organizations should be located within CECA's service area. Our donations support a variety of causes, including rural fire departments, community projects, educational programs, crisis centers and emergency relief.

CECA ORU is dedicated to uplifting local organizations and schools—we encourage you to apply! To apply, simply scan the QR code on the next page or visit our website, ceca.coop/operation-round-up, and select Organization Application. Together, we can continue to make a meaningful impact in our community. ■



1. CECA employees Riley Hilliard, left, and Triston McGehee, right, present a check to the Salvation Army Food Bank last December.
2. McGehee, left, presents an Operation Round-Up check to Toney Prather of Community Rehab Comanche County.
3. McGehee gives an Operation Round-Up check to the Comanche High School Class of 2024 for their Project Graduation.
4. Operation Round-Up provided support for Shawndelle Harrington's Gorman High School cosmetology class, helping students pursue careers as cosmetology professionals.

CECA



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SUBMIT YOUR RECIPES

for our CECA Member Cook



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Soups & Salads
Bread, Spreads & Sauces
Vegetable & Side Dishes
Meats & Main Dishes
Desserts



Submit your recipes by scanning QR code, emailing or mailing in to

Email:

tmcgehee@ceca.coop

Mail to: CECA

C/O: Triston McGehee

P.O. Box 729, Comanche, TX 76442



Calling All Cooks! Share Your Favorite Recipes with CECA!

GOT A FAMILY RECIPE that's been passed down through generations or a dish that never fails to impress at gatherings? We want to hear from you! CECA is gathering recipes from our members for our member cookbook. Whether your recipe is a savory soup, a dessert or anything in between, we have a spot for you to share it. Here's how to do it:

1. Choose Your Category

- Appetizers & Beverages
- Soups & Salads
- Bread, Spreads and Sauces
- Vegetable & Side Dishes
- Meats & Main Dishes
- Desserts

2. Submit Your Recipe

- ▶ Include your name and member number.
- ▶ Tell us a bit about your recipe and list the ingredients: Is it a family favorite? A new creation?

3. How to Submit

- ▶ Mail it to: CECA
C/O Triston McGehee
P.O. Box 729
Comanche, TX 76442 or
- ▶ Email it to: Triston McGehee at tmcgehee@ceca.coop.
- ▶ Scan the QR code on the previous page or visit our online submission form, CECA Recipe Submission.

We can't wait to see (and taste) what you've been cooking up! ■

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

World Teachers' Day
Saturday, October 5

CECA's 86th Annual Meeting
Thursday, October 10 at 6 p.m.

Indigenous Peoples' Day
Monday, October 14

World Pasta Day
Friday, October 25

Halloween and Knock-Knock Joke Day
Thursday, October 31

Cast-Iron Skillet Giveaway Contest

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The Flapper Bandit

She finally fooled bank employees and briefly absconded with a stack of cash

BY MARTHA DEERING

REBECCA BRADLEY ROGERS was a 21-year-old graduate student at the University of Texas and a stenographer in the office of the attorney general in December 1926 when she ran out of tuition money.

Rogers had taken a second job working for a professor who handled business affairs for the Texas State Historical Association, but she mismanaged the funds while the professor was on summer vacation and ended up owing \$1,200 (more than \$21,000 in today's money) to TSHA. To make matters worse, Rogers' mother, who had been fired from her job in Fort Worth, moved in with her and was spending Rogers' paychecks freely.

Deep in debt, Rogers decided she had one option to solve her financial woes:

rob a bank.

Her first attempt, which involved setting fire to a house in Round Rock, north of Austin, as a distraction and then hustling into the nearby bank and yelling "fire!" failed. None of the bank's employees raced outside so she could grab cash in the chaos.

She had better success at Farmers National Bank in Buda, south of the capital, the very next day.

A pretty, petite young lady dressed in the distinctive fashion of the Roaring '20s, Rogers posed as a newspaper reporter in the bank lobby, asking questions of customers and recording their responses. Then she asked to use a typewriter in the tellers' cage and, once inside, pulled out a pistol. She locked

two male employees in the safe at gunpoint after grabbing \$1,000 in new \$5 bills, but first she asked politely if they would have enough air to survive for 30 minutes inside the vault.

Alas, someone wrote down Rogers' license number as she drove away with the cash in her Ford Model T. On the way back to Austin, her car got stuck in the mud and had to be pulled out by a passing dairyman and a team of horses. She took the Ford to be washed upon her return to Austin, and when she came back to get it, the sheriff was waiting for her.

Rogers was arrested and thrown in the clink. She was supposedly still wearing her muddy satin slippers.

Secretly married for over a year to Amarillo lawyer Otis Rogers, Rebecca at first denied that she was married but had to fess up when her husband arrived to help with her defense. The Flapper Bandit or Girl Bandit, as newspapers nationwide labeled her, pleaded insanity, but the prosecutor replied, "Insanity is a disease that criminals get when they are caught."

Otis had his wife examined by three psychologists who testified that she suffered from dementia praecox, which makes a patient unable to determine right from wrong. Today dementia praecox is known as schizophrenia. Many sympathized with the pretty young thief, and it was difficult to find jurors willing to participate in her trials.

Her armed robbery and arson trials both ultimately ended in hung juries—after a successful appeal overturned a robbery conviction and then an insanity plea won over enough jurors. After seven years of litigation, Rogers got off scot-free.

She and her husband moved to Fort Worth, where the fame Otis gained during his wife's trials led to a lucrative criminal defense practice. Rebecca, despite her shady dealings with the law, served as his legal secretary. ■

Pumpkin and Spice

Kick-start your holiday baking with these seasonal treats

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

Indulge in the flavors of fall with this delightful dessert. It combines the moist, spiced richness of pumpkin cake with the sweet crunch of pecans, creating a perfect blend. Ideal for gatherings, this treat brings a festive touch to any occasion.

Texas Pumpkin Sheet Cake With Candied Pecans

CAKE

2 cups flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons baking powder
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
4 eggs
2 cups sugar
1 cup vegetable oil
1 can pumpkin purée (15 ounces)

FROSTING

1 cup (2 sticks) butter, softened
1 package cream cheese (8 ounces), softened
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
3 cups powdered sugar

CANDIED PECANS

½ cup brown sugar
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
2 tablespoons water
1 cup chopped pecans

1. **CAKE:** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a 13-by-18-inch rimmed baking sheet with cooking spray.
2. In a bowl, whisk together flour, baking soda, salt, baking powder, cinnamon and pumpkin pie spice. In another bowl, combine eggs, sugar, vegetable oil and pumpkin purée until fully incorporated. Slowly add the flour mixture, stirring well after each addition, until fully incorporated.
3. Pour the batter onto the prepared baking sheet and spread evenly. Bake 25–30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted comes out clean. Let cool completely.
4. **FROSTING:** Cream together butter and cream cheese in a mixing bowl until light and fluffy. Add vanilla and powdered sugar, and mix until smooth.
5. **CANDIED PECANS:** Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. In a skillet over medium-high heat, combine brown sugar, salt, cinnamon and water. Cook, stirring 1–2 minutes or until the sugar dissolves and the mixture is slightly bubbling.
6. Stir in pecans and cook for an additional 2 minutes, stirring to coat pecans. Remove from heat and spread pecans evenly on parchment paper. Allow to cool completely.
7. Spread frosting evenly over cooled cake and sprinkle with candied pecans.

SERVES 24

TCP Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in Cocina Gris at sweetlifebake.com, where she features a recipe for Pumpkin Cream Cheese Tamales.



Pumpkin Praline Pie

BECKY FRASER
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

This pie is the perfect addition to your fall baking. The combination of creamy pumpkin filling and a crunchy praline pecan topping creates a symphony of textures and flavors. Try this if you can't decide between a pumpkin pie or pecan pie.

PIE

- 1 can pumpkin purée (15 ounces)
- 1 can sweetened condensed milk (14 ounces)
- 1 egg
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- ¾ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 9-inch frozen pie crust, unbaked

CRUMBLE

- ¾ cup pecan halves
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 4 tablespoons (½ stick) butter, at room temperature

1. **PIE:** Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In a bowl, stir together pumpkin purée, sweetened condensed milk, egg, salt, nutmeg, ginger and cinnamon. Pour into unbaked pie shell. Place filled pie on a baking sheet and bake 25 minutes.
2. **CRUMBLE:** While pie bakes, stir together pecans, brown sugar and butter in a bowl until well incorporated.
3. Remove pie from oven and sprinkle crumble over the top. Return pie to oven and bake an additional 30 minutes. Remove from oven and cool completely. Place in fridge and chill 1 hour before serving.

SERVES 8

[MORE RECIPES >](#)

\$500 WINNER

Cinnamon Streusel Pumpkin Coffee Cake

KIM PRYOR
FARMERS EC



Great with coffee, this irresistibly delicious cake is sure to become a seasonal favorite.

SERVES 8-10

STREUSEL

- ½ cup flour
- ½ cup packed brown sugar
- ¾ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cloves
- ⅛ teaspoon ground ginger
- 4 tablespoons (½ stick) butter, melted
- ¼ cup chopped pecans



CAKE

- ½ cup sugar
- 6 tablespoons (¾ stick) butter, at room temperature
- ¾ cup pumpkin purée
- 2 tablespoons milk
- 2 tablespoons sour cream
- 1 egg

- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup flour
- 1¼ teaspoons baking powder
- 1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon
- ¾ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger

GLAZE

- ¾ cup powdered sugar
- ½ teaspoon maple extract
- 1 tablespoon milk, or more as needed
- Chopped pecans, for garnish

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line a 9-inch round cake pan with a circle of parchment paper in the bottom and coat with cooking spray.
2. **STREUSEL:** In a bowl, combine all but the pecans, and mix with a fork until all ingredients are incorporated. Set aside.
3. **CAKE:** In a bowl, beat sugar and butter until light and fluffy, 3-4 minutes. Add pumpkin purée, milk and sour cream, and mix until well incorporated. Add egg and vanilla extract and mix until smooth. In another bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves and ginger. Add dry ingredients to batter and mix until smooth.
4. Spread half the cake batter in the bottom of the prepared cake pan. Top batter with about half the streusel mixture. Spread remaining cake batter over streusel. Sprinkle chopped pecans and remaining streusel over the top of the cake batter.
5. Bake 24-26 minutes or until a toothpick inserted comes out with only a few crumbs. Remove cake from oven and allow to cool in the pan about 5 minutes. Remove to finish cooling on a cooling rack.
6. **GLAZE:** Combine powdered sugar, maple extract and milk in a small bowl and whisk until smooth. You can always add a little more milk or sugar, if needed. Drizzle the glaze over the coffee cake. Garnish with chopped pecans.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

PIES, PIES, PIES DUE OCTOBER 10

We hated math until we learned about Pi Day (3/14). Celebrate with us by sharing your favorite pie recipe, and you just might be adding \$500 to your name. Enter by October 10.



Pumpkin Cornbread With Whipped Cinnamon Honey Butter

PAM KINKEMA
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

This seasonal twist on classic cornbread features the rich, earthy flavors of pumpkin and a light, fluffy texture. Topped with creamy, spiced honey butter, it's a great addition to any meal, offering warmth and comfort in every bite.

CORNBREAD

1 cup flour
1 cup cornmeal
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon ground ginger
¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
¼ teaspoon ground cloves
½ cup light brown sugar
4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter, melted



1 cup canned pumpkin purée (15 ounces)
½ cup sour cream
2 eggs

CINNAMON HONEY BUTTER

½ cup (1 stick) butter
⅓ cup honey
¼ cup powdered sugar
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1. CORNBREAD: Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Coat an 8-by-8-inch baking dish

with cooking spray.

2. In a bowl, whisk together flour, cornmeal, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg and cloves. Make a well in center of flour mixture and set aside.

3. In a separate bowl, stir together brown sugar, melted butter and pumpkin purée. Add in sour cream and eggs, and stir until well blended. Pour mixture into well of flour mixture and fold until just combined and no streaks of flour remain.

4. Spread batter in an even layer in prepared pan. Bake 25–30 minutes, until toothpick inserted comes out clean. Cool slightly on wire rack, then cut into squares.

5. CINNAMON HONEY BUTTER: Whip butter with mixer until smooth. Add honey, powdered sugar and cinnamon, and mix on low speed until combined, then increase to high speed and whip until light and fluffy.

6. Serve bread with whipped butter.

SERVES 9

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Dragons Not Included

Newman's Castle near Bellville puts visitors in a real-life fairy tale

BY CHET GARNER

LIKE MANY YOUNG boys, I grew up pretending to be a medieval knight, fighting dragons and rescuing damsels in distress. My castle was usually a cardboard box or a pile of couch cushions. Mike Newman had the same boyhood fantasies but was brave enough to turn them into a royal reality.

Nestled in the woods outside of Bellville, a town of about 4,200 residents about an hour west of Houston, lies the architectural wonder known as Newman's Castle. Newman started the project in 1998, and over the next decade, the local baker personally constructed the castle that would make any fairy tale king jealous. There's a moat and fortified walls protecting the place Newman built as his private home powered by San Bernard Electric Cooperative.

Sadly, the hero of our tale died in March, but his castle is still open for tours, which can be reserved by calling Newman's Bakery. My tour started at the Bellville bakery, followed by a group caravan to the castle, where we were given wooden swords and knighted into the king's court. After crossing the moat, I was tasked with raising the drawbridge by running inside a human-sized hamster wheel. I immediately regretted the extra kolach I had eaten on the drive over.

Once inside the walls, we toured the chapel, ate in the banquet hall and climbed to the top of the 60-foot bell tower. We even got to try out the castle's dungeon of medieval torture devices, including a mythical iron maiden, stocks and a bed of nails. As the grand finale, we launched stones at imaginary dragons using a massive historically accurate trebuchet.

It felt like a real trip into the depths of Newman's ingenuity. His lasting legacy helps us realize that the make-believe doesn't always have to stay in our imagination. ■

ABOVE Chet, left, and the late Mike Newman at Newman's Castle.

TCP See the castle for yourself with the video on our website. Find all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

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

OCTOBER

10

Corsicana Bellamy Brothers, (903) 874-7792, corsicanapalace.com

11

Grapevine Barn Dance, (817) 410-3185, grapevinetexasusa.com

12

Burnet Texas State Button Society Fall Workshop & Sale, (214) 808-5610, texasstatebuttonociety.com

Corsicana Airsho, (903) 654-4847, coyotesquadron.org

Granbury Monarch Fest, (817) 326-6005, actonnaturecenter.org

Luling Night in Old Luling, facebook.com/nightinoldluling 2022

McKinney Halloween at the Heard, (972) 562-5566, heardmuseum.org

Chappell Hill [12-13] Scarecrow Festival, (979) 836-6033, chappellhillhistoricalsociety.com

Edom [12-13] Art Festival, (903) 258-5192, edomarts.com

16

Corpus Christi Lobster Feast, (361) 883-8405, corpuschristi seamenscenter.org

18

Fairfield [18-19] Big T Memorial State Championship BBQ Cookoff, bigtmemorial cookoff@gmail.com, goldencircletx.com

Levelland [18-19] Petticoats on the Prairie Premier Vintage Market, (806) 894-4161, facebook.com/petticoatsontheprairie

Woodville [18-19] Harvest Festival, (409) 283-2272, heritage-village.org

Brenham [18-20] Texas Arts and Music Festival, (979) 337-7580, texasartsandmusicfestival.com

19

Giddings Cars & Coffee, (979) 542-3455, giddingsstx.com

New Braunfels Dia de los Muertos Festival, (830) 625-2385, nbchamber.com

Fayetteville [19-20] Lickskillet Days, (979) 378-2800, greaterfayettevillechamber.org

25

Brenham [25-26] heARTfest, (979) 836-7248, facebook.com/heartfestbrenham

26

Sanger Sellabration, (940) 222-9440, sangertexas.com

Weatherford Fall Fling Car, Truck and Motorcycle Show, parkercountycruisers.com

Granbury [26-27] Harvest Moon Festival of the Arts, (682) 936-4550, granburysquare.com

31

Levelland Trunk or Treat, (806) 894-9079, downtownlevelland.com

NOVEMBER

1

Oakville Dobie Dichos, (361) 319-3067, dobiedichos.com

Ingram [1-3] Texas Arts and Crafts Fair, (830) 367-5121, txartsandcraftsfair.com

TCP Submit Your Event

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Climbing High

There are lots of reasons to climb high: to get a better view, to reach something in need of repair or simply to prove to oneself that it can be done. This month, let's crane our necks and see who has scrambled their way to the top.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ

1 KAYLE GRAHAM
TRI-COUNTY EC

"My dog, Cooper, and I love to hike. We always try to find a really high rock to climb and enjoy the views."

2 NICKI KLEIN
BLUEBONNET EC

Colorado River climber.

3 MEAGAN BENAVIDES
NUECES EC

"DJ climbs a pole as he competes for his chance to join the NEC rodeo team."

4 GUYNA POLASEK
GVEC

"Just had it set up and wanted a closer look."



Upcoming Contests

DUE OCT 10 I Love

DUE NOV 10 Small Spaces

DUE DEC 10 Characters



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

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



There's No Party Like La Pitada

After a Cowboys win, the biggest grassroots celebration is way down south

BY W.F. STRONG
PHOTO BY ERICH SCHLEGEL

MORE THAN 500 miles from AT&T Stadium, there's a Dallas Cowboys tradition that's unlike any other. You might expect it in Dallas or Arlington, but to find it in a Brownsville neighborhood, in far South Texas, is surprising, loud and heartwarming. It's called La Pitada.

The name means "the honking." After every Cowboys victory, hundreds of vehicles and a few thousand people hit Southmost Road in a cacophony of honking, whistling, music and victorious *gritos* (shouts). It's a moving feast, a mobile tailgate, an impromptu parade—a sacred rite of celebration for the Cowboys faithful.

Fans drive slowly, honking vigorously, windows down, collectively expressing their joy. And to make it all the more joyful, taquerias fill the air with the scent of their aromatic spices.

I went to a recent *pitada* with photographer and friend Erich Schlegel so that he could capture the display of chaotic bliss for *Texas Co-op Power*. He took photos like a combat photographer while I held the light, risking our lives in the middle of the street for the perfect shot.

I like that there is no official organization behind La Pitada. There's nothing top-down about it. It's a grassroots tradition, of the people, by the people and for the people.

All that's needed is a Cowboys win. As soon as that happens, *la gente* jump into whatever vehicle is handy—including hot-rods and low-riders—wearing Cowboys hats, caps or helmets and take off with window flags flapping.

Some kids stand up through sunroofs, waving pennants. Pickups mount 6-foot Cowboys flags that billow to full length. Motorcyclists, sometimes with faux Cowboys cheerleaders riding behind them, rev their engines. There's even a house along the route painted in silver and blue.

La Pitada is raucous but peaceful. Celebratory whistles never cease. "Go Cowboys" is heard often, but the most common mantra uses more colorful verbiage.

La Pitada started in the glory days of the 1990s when the Cowboys won three Super Bowls. In the late '70s, the Cowboys came to be known as America's Team, but they also became Mexico's team after Spanish-language broadcasts of the games aired in Mexico. It helped that the Cowboys for decades had kickers with roots in Mexico and soccer: Efen Herrera, Rafael Septién and Danny Villanueva.

Southmost is an old immigrant community where Spanish is the first language of the majority of people. They have strong familial ties to Mexico.

If the Cowboys ever win the Super Bowl again, La Pitada that day will be legendary. Might just be bigger than Dallas! ■

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