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HORSE SENSE

Healing through a connection with animals

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Andy Kaul works knots out of a horse's mane.

FEATURE

8 The Healing Power of Horses Relief from ailments and disabilities can be found astride therapy horses.

Story and photos by Julia Robinson

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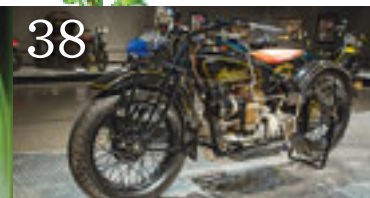
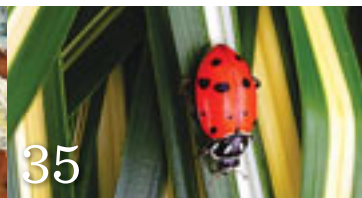
Tangled Up in Fandangle
By Gene Fowler

NEXT MONTH

A Hidden Man's Gem Eccentric Elmer Kleb helped turn his family homestead into a woodland preserve.



HORSE GROOMING: JULIA ROBINSON. HUMMINGBIRD: LARRY DITTO



ON THE COVER Brooklyn caresses Neut after a riding lesson at REACH Therapeutic Riding Center in McGregor. Photo by Julia Robinson

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Thoughts on Cookies

Normally, the recipes I have tried are very good. However, the Brown Butter Oatmeal Raisin Cookies [*All Hail the Cookie Jar*, September 2018] not only were a lot of trouble to make, but they also tasted horrible. Even my grandsons who eat anything would not finish the cookie.

DONNA HENDRICK | PALO PINTO

Editor's note: Cookie opinions run the gamut. Some found those cookies too salty, while others (including our photo shoot crew) claim they're fabulous. They're a favorite of Paula Disbrowe, our food editor, who suggests using less salt and regular butter (instead of browned) for a milder flavor.

I have a magnet on my icebox that says, "A balanced diet is a cookie in each hand." I so agree.

KAY PRYOR | VIA FACEBOOK

About Bears and Dogs

I want to point out one error in *Bear Dogs of El Paso* [June 2018]. The second sentence says the ancient mammals were "ancestral to both bears and dogs," but it should have said



they were "closely related to the common ancestor of bears and dogs." The important point is that the relationship among bear dogs, dogs and bears is like that of cousins and not ancestors-descendants.

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Wait a Minute!

I enjoy Focus on Texas each month. Love the clocks [October 2018] but have to point out that thing about a clock being right twice a day only works if the clock is stopped.

DONNA ELLIOTT | AUSTIN

Keep Your Eye on the Ball

The first high-five by Dusty Baker [*Up for Discussion*, Currents, October 2018] brings back a great old memory. A few weeks prior, the Dodgers played the Astros in the

Still a Winning Pastry

During the Christmas seasons of my youth in the 1960s, neighbors on our country road brought us delicious home-baked cakes, cookies and candies. My home economics teacher, Helen, was one of our neighbors, and every year we looked forward to her slightly sweetened yeast dough baked around a brown sugar and pecan filling that she called Danish Kringle [*Holiday Recipe Contest*, November 2018].

Although we loved seeing her, we waited in keen anticipation for her to leave. Her car would have barely left the driveway before we tore into the melt-in-your-mouth tenderness of the still-warm pastry.

LINDA RUSH | OAKHURST | SAM HOUSTON EC



Astrodome. We had great seats, about 10 rows up and directly behind first base.

Baker hit a line drive foul ball right at my wife's head. The good thing was she wasn't hurt. The bad thing was my red left palm and the ball in someone else's hand.

VARDY VINCENT | KINGSBURY

BLUEBONNET EC

Reeves' Legacy

The idea that Bass Reeves [*Bass Reeves, Lawman Extra-ordinaire*, October 2018] was the inspiration for the Lone Ranger comes only from Reeves' descendants. The fictional character is much more likely based on the Zane Grey novel *The Lone Star Ranger*, based on the exploits of Texas Rangers Capt. John Hughes.

MIKE FRANKLIN | POTEET

KARNES EC

I enjoyed the article so much I am going to try and buy the book [*Black Gun, Silver Star: The Life and Legend of Frontier Marshal Bass Reeves*].

LILLIAN BEASLEY | COOKS POINT

BLUEBONNET EC

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Santa Claus Is Coming to Town

It's time for the children around **FORT DAVIS** to be on their best behavior because Santa arrives **DECEMBER 8** via firetruck—as he always does—in the parade down State Street that kicks off **FRONTIER CHRISTMAS**.

Santa visits with children and sits for photos at Jeff Davis County Library after the parade. Outside, in Kelly Pavilion, enjoy hot cocoa, live music, crafts and a cookie-baking contest. Elementary schoolchildren serenade revelers with Christmas carols followed by the high school Spanish program's *baile folklórico*.

Fort Davis in far West Texas is a popular destination in part because of nearby attractions such as the Fort Davis National Historic Site, the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute's nature center and botanical gardens, Davis Mountains State Park, and the University of Texas McDonald Observatory.

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ANNIVERSARIES

WE TURN 75!

From time to time, these pages of *Texas Co-op Power* commemorate milestone anniversaries and birthdays as a way to mark history and progress. Starting in January and continuing each month next year, we will celebrate an anniversary near to our hearts: 2019 marks 75 years of this magazine.

Texas Co-op Power started as an eight-page newspaper called *Texas Cooperative Electric Power* in July 1944. Electric cooperatives were still in their infancy, and members needed a way to stay informed about the benefits and innovations electricity delivered to rural living. Perhaps more important, members needed an ally and a soapbox because as co-ops spread across Texas, investor-owned utilities, who for years wanted nothing to do with rural folks, began trying to wrest business away from co-ops. *Texas Cooperative Electric Power* stood with members as co-ops persevered and spread.

Over time, *Texas Co-op Power* grew into the general interest magazine it is today. It is still produced for co-op members and still delivers important co-op messages, reaching 1.56 million members monthly.

Each month in 2019, *Currents* will showcase a timeline that highlight major events and people during our 75-year history. In addition, we'll feature a retro recipe tweaked to accommodate evolving tastes and cooking methods. And each quarter, *Texas History* will shine a spotlight on the magazine.

Where To Find Happiness



The Texas towns of Plano, No. 5, and Grand Prairie, No. 10, are among the happiest cities in the U.S., according to personal finance website WalletHub, which ranked 182 large cities based on emotional and physical well-being, income and employment, and community and environment. No. 1 is Fremont, California.



CO-OP PEOPLE

Bright Light in Shelbyville

CADE FOEHNER, 21, electrified audiences last spring with a thrilling run on *American Idol*, ascending to the final five of 24 contestants culled from tens of thousands who vied for a spot nationwide. He hails from Shelbyville, where his dad, Rick, is a serviceman at Deep East Texas Electric Cooperative.

FOEHNER TRANSFIXED viewers with his smoky vocals and soulful take on classic rock standards *All Along the Watchtower* and *Simple Man*, dedicating the latter to his mom on the show's Mother's Day episode.

THE HOMEGROWN CELEBRITY shared a stage with fellow Texas musician Gary Clark Jr. on the show's season finale. Foehner, Clark and co-contestant Dennis Lorenzo delivered a scorching performance of Clark's *Bright Lights*, with its driving refrain, "You're gonna know my name by the end of the night." We certainly know it now.

TECH KNOWLEDGE

EVERYTHING CLICKS

This month marks 50 years since the debut of the technology-changing oN-Line System. Douglas Engelbart and his team at the Stanford Research Institute essentially kicked off the personal computer revolution with what has come to be described as "the mother of all demos."

On December 9, 1968, in San Francisco, Engelbart demonstrated text and images displayed simultaneously on separate devices, functional video-conferencing and working hypertexts. He also showcased the first model of the common computer mouse.

"That hour and 40 minutes was, in the end, one of the most impactful technological presentations to be delivered since Gutenberg got some people together for cocktails, crudités and a show of how he'd hacked a wine press," Megan Garber wrote in *The Atlantic* in 2013.

ALMANAC

Christmas Past

Silent Night turns 200 years old. *Stille Nacht* was heard for the first time in a village church in Oberndorf, Austria, at midnight Mass in 1818.

A *Christmas Carol*, Charles Dickens' classic, debuted 175 years ago in London. Six thousand copies were published December 19, 1843. By Christmas Eve, it was sold out.

THE HEALING



POWER OF

HORSES



RELIEF from ailments and disabilities can be found astride therapy horses

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JULIA ROBINSON



The kids show up for their riding sessions right on time. They strap on their helmets and calmly lead their horses from the cool shade of the barn into the hot, dusty arena at REACH Therapeutic Riding Center in McGregor, 20 miles southwest of Waco.

Twelve-year-old E.J. works on cinching a saddle strap. “Pull, pull, pull,” cheers side-walker Jesse Allen. E.J. grimaces with the effort as his horse, Jessie, a 22-year-old black-and-white paint, stands quiet and calm. With just a little more oomph, E.J. maneuvers the leather strap into the correct hole and breaks into a wide grin. “He couldn’t do that at all five months ago,” Allen says.

Offering health and mobility gains with the aid of horses is the mission of Larry Barnett, a retired U.S. Air Force pilot who became a therapeutic riding instructor in 2004. He founded REACH in 2007 to use equine therapy, or hippotherapy, to improve the physical and mental well-being of children and adults with special needs.

“This was his dream,” says Kristin Bolfing-Volcik, REACH executive director. “He went to a bunch of different riding centers to study what they did, and he had a lot of mentors from around Texas.” The result of that research and dedication is

the REACH Therapeutic Riding Center, opened in 2008 and situated on 30 acres of pastureland donated by Gary and Diane Heavin, the founders of Curves International fitness studios. The REACH barn has stalls for 10 horses, an office, a viewing room, therapy room, tack room, wash

Top and left: Brooklyn, 12, maneuvers 20-year-old quarter horse Newt around the arena at REACH Therapeutic Riding Center in McGregor. Far left: Tina Tillert first came to REACH as part of a veterans outreach program but now volunteers at the facility.





AN INSTRUCTOR gives directions and encouragement, but the kids are in charge of these animals more than 10 times their weight.



stalls and wheelchair-accessible restrooms. The center has recreational use of the rest of the Heavens' 400-acre property, which includes an extensive network of riding trails for therapeutic group rides.

Bolfing-Volcik, a Waco native and Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative member, started volunteering with the nonprofit organization in 2008 and went on to become certified by Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International as a therapeutic riding instructor. She helped the operation grow to its current size, serving 130 kids as young as 3 as well as adults and veterans of all ages. The center helps people with varying needs and disabilities, including those with muscular dystrophy and autism, trauma survivors, and patients in addiction recovery.

Greek physician Hippocrates was the first to write about the "healing rhythm" of riding horses in the fifth century B.C. In modern times, equine therapy was developed to treat soldiers wounded during World War I and came to the U.S. in the 1950s and 1960s after a Danish rider disabled by polio won a silver medal for dressage riding in the 1952 Olympics.

Equine therapy is a tool rather than a profession. Licensed therapists—physical therapists, occupational therapists and speech-language pathologists, for example—become certified by PATH International or the American Hippotherapy Association to use equine therapy as part of their practice.

According to PATH International, hippotherapy provides three-dimensional movement that mimics human walking. "You could work out every single day, and you're still sore when you get off that horse because you're moving all those different muscles," Bolfing-Volcik says. The movement of the horse provides stimulation to the parts of the body involved in walking, provides a sense of rhythm and gait, and allows for more repetition per

session than using machines in an office or gym setting. Performing regular barn chores and grooming can be healthy exercise for those building dexterity, balance or strength.

Horses are prey animals and

Top: Christopher, 12, performs a 360-degree turn on Stanley during an obstacle course exercise. Left: E.J., 12, sits tall in the saddle during his riding lesson. Far left: Tina Tillert leads Stanley out of his stall for a trail ride.

“HORSES can feel your energy, so when you calm yourself down and then the horse calms down, it’s like looking at yourself in the mirror.”

are sensitive to the emotions of those in their herd, Bolfig-Volcic explains. This makes them an emotional mirror for humans working through anxiety, trauma, addiction or other emotional disturbances. Because horses don’t hide their emotions, people learn to identify and correct their own behaviors to further their relationship with the animal.

Horses also provide motivation for those who are otherwise bored, daunted or disengaged. “Some of these kids are in clinic a lot and they don’t want to do the work, but then they come out here and they’re riding a horse and they don’t even know they’re working,” Bolfig-Volcic says.

Brooklyn knows that feeling. The 12-year-old was diagnosed with cognitive and speech delays at a young age. “Every day, she went to school, went to her [speech] therapy and then came home. There was no excitement, and she fell into a rut,” explains her mother, LuCretia Denkins. School was a source of depression and struggle for Brooklyn, but she always loved horses. “She’s obsessed and wants me to buy her one,” Denkins says.

An insurance liaison discovered the REACH program and applied for Brooklyn to attend. She was approved for seven lessons last summer. “She has blossomed so much,” Denkins says. “It’s really amazing to see.”

Out in the arena, Brooklyn and the other students check their saddle girth and the length of their stirrups. Unlike E.J., Brooklyn has plenty of strength to tighten the straps. Her struggle is with memory. “If you tell her three things, she can remember one, maybe two,” Denkins says. “But with the horses, she has memorized everything. She knows what it really means to want to learn something.”

The students mount up

Top: “If I have a hard day, I know I have to present to the horses in a calm manner,” says veteran Dalysé Mayo, brushing Jessie. Far right: E.J. trots with the assistance of Jesse Allen, right, and Emily Mosher. Right: Volunteer John Boyd, left, shows new veteran attendee Andy Kaul how to brush a horse.







Christopher, right, leads Stanley from the stable to the arena. REACH students learn to care for horses as well as ride them—grooming the animals and helping with chores around the stable.

from a mobility-assisted platform, the horses patiently waiting for the riders to find their stirrups. They warm up slowly, the side-walkers taking the reins as the kids circle their arms out to the side and make torso twists from the saddle. The movement of the horse adds a level of difficulty for kids who are building muscle and improving mobility.

After a few more exercises, the kids take the reins and lead the horses around cones and barrels and through a short maze made of poles on the ground. Then they perform a 360-degree turn inside a box marked on the dirt. An instructor gives directions and encouragement, but the kids are in charge of these animals more than 10 times their weight.

“There’s no words in the human vocabulary that can explain the emotional and spiritual experience going on between you and that 1,200-pound creature,” says Charity Martin, a barn assistant. “You are trying to trust, and it’s trying to build trust with you.”

Allen agrees. He became involved with REACH as a participant in a post-traumatic stress disorder treatment program through the Waco office of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Allen was a firefighter and paramedic before joining the Army and experienced the effects of PTSD after his service ended.

“I came home from Afghanistan in 2010, and I didn’t care anymore,” Allen says. “Eight years of PTSD therapy, medication, groups, blah, blah, blah. ... You’re never fixed, but this is the one thing that helped me the most.”

Allen was anxious on that first trip to the barn in the summer of 2017. “Horses can feel your energy,” he says, “so when you calm yourself down and then the horse calms down, it’s like looking at yourself in the mirror.” Allen kept coming back and devel-

WEB EXTRAS

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oped a special bond with Kit, a paint with a large white blaze down his forehead. When his program ended, Allen asked to continue on as a volunteer, first with veterans, then with kids. Allen began enjoying life again, and other people saw it. “People said they had their old Jesse back,” he says. “My enthusiasm came back, and I’m back to helping people.”

Allen credits the staff but mostly the horses for his transformation. Now he gets to see the same transformation in those he helps. “We have kids in this barn right now who in the last five months have gone from little bratty little kids who are in their shells and shut down or no emotions at all to the sweetest, kindest, hardest-working little people,” Allen says.

Earlier this year, Allen took on a paid position as veteran program director and hosts *Horses for Warriors*, a Monday veterans-only program with unstructured riding time, optional group activities and a catered dinner. “The amount of good and help it does—people don’t realize,” he says. “I’m all about Western medicine as a paramedic. I’m not a naturopathic person, but this is an unused resource that can seriously help people out—kids and veterans.”

Near the end of Brooklyn’s session, the instructor tells the kids it’s time to trot. Brooklyn emits a small yelp and raises her arms with excitement. The students form a line at the end of the arena and one by one get their horses up to speed. The side-walkers jog along with them, and the kids beam as they bounce along in the rising dust.

At the end of class, they dismount, wiping the dust from their jeans and hands. Brooklyn pets the face of Newt, a 10-year-old quarter horse, and gives his cheek a scratch. It’s only been an hour, but the students walk taller and lighter than when they entered the arena. “I haven’t seen her that happy in a long time because school has beaten her down so much,” Denkins says. “She talks all about horses all the way home. She went from not talking at all to nonstop talking, and that’s amazing.”

Learn more about **Julia Robinson** at juliarobinsonphoto.com.

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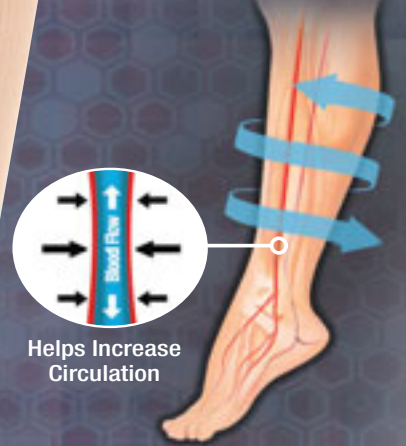
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We Close 2018 with Hearts Full of Gratitude



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER DARREN SCHAUER

In this final month of 2018, as we gather with family and friends, our spirits are lifted in fellowship, gratitude and kindness. We celebrate life's many blessings as we reflect on the successes and challenges of the year-gone-by and on what lies ahead in 2019. I am immensely thankful to be part of the GVEC family and to play a role in an organization that values people and community over earnings and revenue. I am especially thankful for each of you, our members, who have made GVEC's eight-decade mission of service possible. Thank you for trusting and supporting us not only as your electric cooperative, but for extending that relationship by turning to us for other products and services.

For example, 2018 marked the 50th year of GVEC's air conditioning and heating business. The fact that the communities of the Guadalupe Valley have trusted us for five decades for their AC and heating needs gives us a great sense of humility and accomplishment, along with a great excitement for what the years ahead hold in store. 2018 also marked our fifth year of providing Solar sales and services through GVEC Home® (which itself turned 20 this year). We offer these products and services today because of member inquiries over the years. I speak for the entire GVEC employee family when I tell you how fortunate we feel to have members who prompt and inspire us to constantly grow and evolve.

In October, we reached the one-year anniversary of our Electrician services. These services came about, in part, as an extension of Solar, but also because our membership had long asked about the possibility of adding them. Our success in this area over the last 14 months demonstrates not only our ongoing commitment to "identifying and investing in products and services that fulfill the needs of those we serve," but also of the trust local communities place in GVEC to deliver quality, value and reliability with every product and service. And 2018 marked our seventh year of GVEC.net Fiber Internet (GVEC.net itself also turned 20 this year). We are greatly excited about the future of this business, as it represents a revolution in coming years in how the communities of the Guadalupe Valley communicate and use the internet.

None of this success would be possible without the support and confidence of our loyal members. So we thank you for allowing us to meet your needs while, at the same time, enabling us to grow beyond our roots as an electricity provider. And on behalf of everyone at GVEC, we wish you a merry Christmas and happy New Year.

I am always interested in your comments and feedback. Contact me by phone at 830.857.1152, by email at dschauer@gvec.org or by mail at P.O. Box 118, Gonzales, Texas 78629.

Respectfully,



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Practicing energy efficiency can affect the price of wholesale power. The less power you use, the less we buy, which means lower costs are passed on to you.

GVEC ELECTRICIAN SERVICES

LAUNCHES ONTO THE WEB

Visit us at gvecELECTRICIANservice.com

In November 2017, we launched Electrician services through GVEC Home®. Over the years, we'd received numerous member inquiries about adding electrical work to our service options and we listened. Ultimately, our launch of Solar services in 2013 paved the way toward developing in-house Electrician services.

A SYNERGY OF SOLAR & COMMUNITY NEED

During the initial years of our Solar business, we commissioned a contractor to do installations. However, GVEC takes great pride in delivering comprehensive customer experiences from start to finish. As such, we began to explore bringing installation of our Solar products in-house. As we considered the possibilities, we uncovered another promising line of services for which Solar installations could serve as a launching platform: Electrician services.

ANNOUNCING THE NEWEST ADDITION TO OUR ONLINE FAMILY

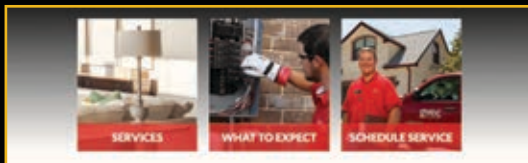
We're pleased to announce our next step forward in Electrician services: gvecELECTRICIANservice.com. With our newest website, you can get an overview of the electrical services we offer, along with a FAQ page of common questions we hear regarding electrical work. You can also provide feedback about our Electrician services, find info about our other services and much more.

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SO KEEP OUR NUMBER HANDY—866.684.2359—AND VISIT GVECELECTRICIANSERVICE.COM SOON!



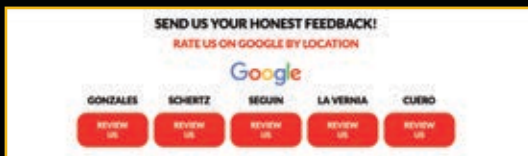
We've designed the interface at gvecELECTRICIANservice.com to be clear and simple, with large buttons and straightforward options.



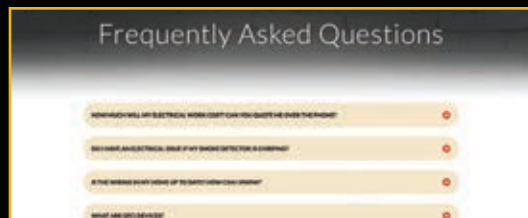
We worked hard to streamline gvecELECTRICIANservice.com. We want you to find what you need quickly and easily.

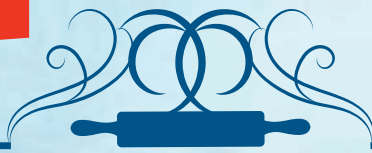


At GVEC, we've learned that the best way to improve ourselves is to listen to our members and customers. That's why we provide numerous options at gvecELECTRICIANservice.com for you to tell us how we're doing.



If you've got a question about electrical work, the FAQs page is a good starting point.





For Community & Church:

Shiner Parishioners Make Strudels by the Thousands

CONFECTIONARY CALLING

Back in the 1980's, Saints Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church in Shiner found itself needing additional funds for its many programs and ministries. A group of parishioners decided to tackle the problem with a confectionary solution: strudels.

The original planning committee for the Sts. Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church Strudel Sale saw great potential in the popular German confection for boosting their church's budget demands and community outreach.

FOUNDED ON FAMILY

The committee discovered the perfect strudel recipe within the Shiner community. It came from Emily Patek, the matriarch of a prominent local family whose husband, Joseph Patek, Sr., founded a popular local grocery store that remains in business to this day. Mrs. Patek had passed the recipe to her daughters, one of whom—Barbara Lloyd—offered it to the church's event and went on to oversee dough-making for the event's first 25 years.

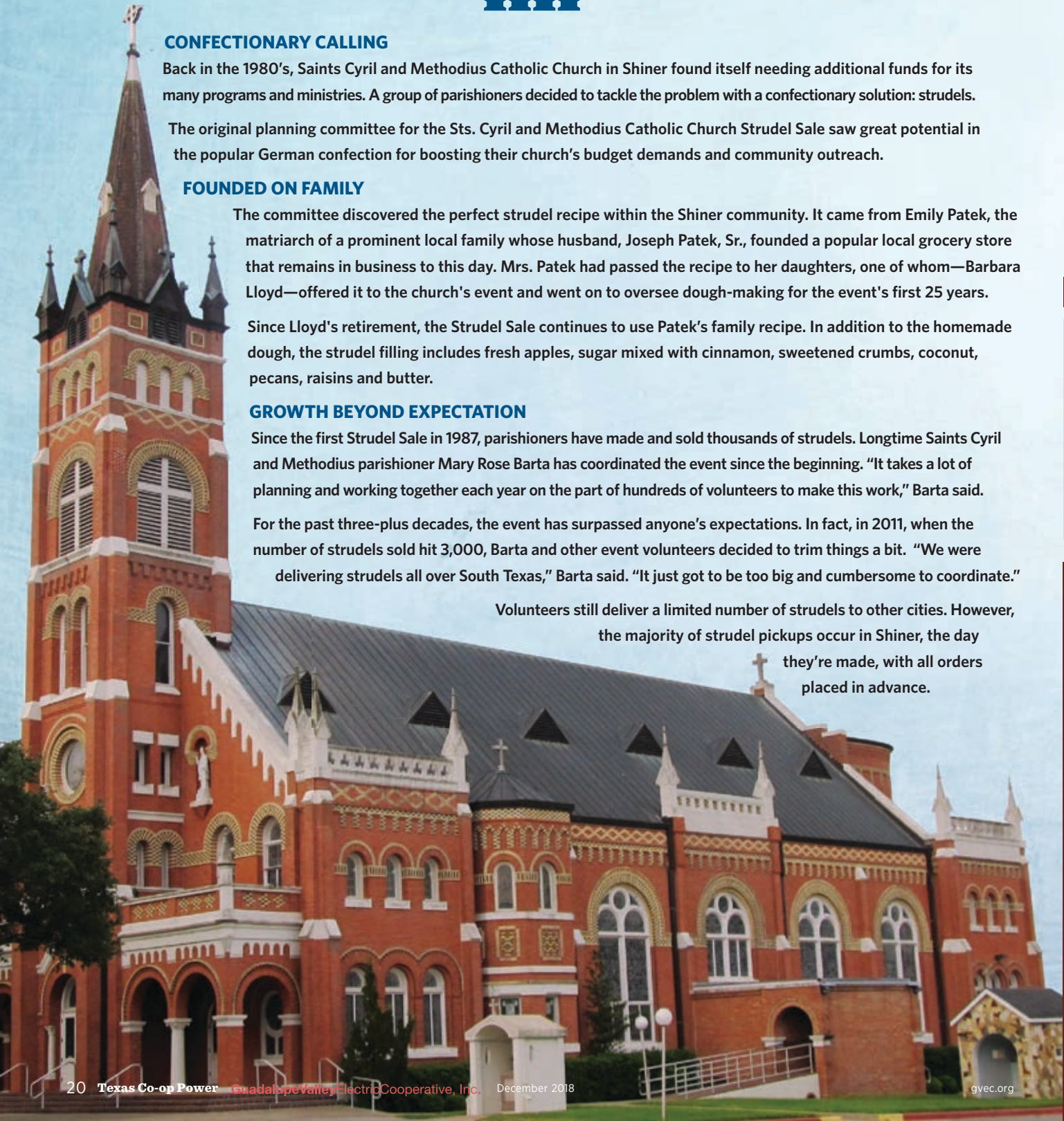
Since Lloyd's retirement, the Strudel Sale continues to use Patek's family recipe. In addition to the homemade dough, the strudel filling includes fresh apples, sugar mixed with cinnamon, sweetened crumbs, coconut, pecans, raisins and butter.

GROWTH BEYOND EXPECTATION

Since the first Strudel Sale in 1987, parishioners have made and sold thousands of strudels. Longtime Saints Cyril and Methodius parishioner Mary Rose Barta has coordinated the event since the beginning. "It takes a lot of planning and working together each year on the part of hundreds of volunteers to make this work," Barta said.

For the past three-plus decades, the event has surpassed anyone's expectations. In fact, in 2011, when the number of strudels sold hit 3,000, Barta and other event volunteers decided to trim things a bit. "We were delivering strudels all over South Texas," Barta said. "It just got to be too big and cumbersome to coordinate."

Volunteers still deliver a limited number of strudels to other cities. However, the majority of strudel pickups occur in Shiner, the day they're made, with all orders placed in advance.



A YEAR FOR REPAIRS

The event is held on the second Saturday in November (November 10, this year). Since 2011, the sale has averaged nearly 2,000 strudels each year. The actual strudel making happens at Shiner's Knights of Columbus Hall, where the strudels are rolled out, filled, wrapped up and packaged. Exact numbers for 2018 weren't available at press time, but all indications point to another successful year. This year's proceeds will be especially important, too, as the church finishes replacing its roof and repairing damage sustained in Hurricane Harvey and during the 2014 South Texas hailstorm.

HANDING DOWN A COMMUNITY TRADITION

Barta is thankful for her time coordinating the Strudel Sale, but is ready to let somebody else take over. "There comes a time when you've got to pass it to someone younger," she said, adding that she'll continue to be involved "one way or another" as long as she's able. "It's time for new leadership," she added.

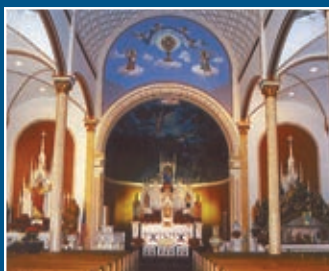
To that end, in 2018, a committee of ten to twelve parishioners formed a "Strudel Committee," working together to coordinate this year's event. The committee extended its thanks to Barta for her leadership over the years. They also thanked the hundreds of volunteers who work each sale, as well as the pastors of Shiner Catholic Church over the years.

According to Barta, the present pastor, Rev. Bryan Heyer, is deeply involved each year and, like many of his predecessors, never hesitates to take up a rolling pin alongside other volunteers. "It takes a lot of people—parishioners as well as friends of parishioners—who voluntarily come to make this project work," Barta said. "The parish is so blessed to have each and every one of them."

TAKE & BAKE CAMARADERIE

"This event," Barta said, "is about supporting our Church, while at the same time enjoying camaraderie and having fun as we work together for a common cause. And since we sell the strudels unbaked, you can store them in your freezer; when you want a fresh baked delicious dessert, simply pop one in the oven for about an hour, enjoy the enticing aroma and it's ready to serve."

For more information on Saints Cyril & Methodius Catholic Church in Shiner, Texas, visit their website at sscmshiner.org.



Listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1983, Saints Cyril & Methodius Catholic Church, Shiner, is a treasure inside and out. The current church, which opened in 1921, is designed in the Romanesque revival style popular at the time. Its most

well-known attraction is the sanctuary, featuring brilliantly painted murals and opulent stained-glass windows. These stunning works of craftsmanship have established Sts. Cyril & Methodius as part of a number of similarly ornamented churches in Central Texas known collectively as "The Painted Churches of Texas."



This event is about supporting our Church, while at the same time enjoying camaraderie and having fun as we work together for a common cause.



Three Generations: This 2016 photo from the 30th Saints Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church Strudel Sale shows three generations of Mary Ann Rother's (in glasses) family, all of whom have regularly participated in the event.

- Photo by Margaret Targac -

Dreams come true with GVEC's scholarship program.

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- Encourage your child or grandchild to apply now—instead of at the last minute. It could increase their chances of crafting a thoughtful, thorough and well-written application for judging.
- High school seniors graduating in Spring 2019 are eligible.
- Scholarships can be used for college or trade school. Several \$2,500 scholarships will be awarded.
- For eligibility rules and online applications, visit www.gvec.org/community/scholarships.

DO YOU DREAM OF A SCHOLARSHIP?



DEADLINE

Application deadline is midnight, February 1, 2019

Blog Alert

Parades; snow-lined slides; Christmas tree and wreath lightings; Winterfest; magical holiday strolls; breakfast with Santa; Santa's workshop; pictures with Santa; Santa's market; Swingin' Little Christmas concerts—you can do all this and more in GVEC's service territory! But we don't have enough room to review it all here. That's what our blog is for! For more on all the holiday fun awaiting you right here in the Guadalupe Valley, visit GVEC.org!



'Tis the Season!

All GVEC offices will be closed December 24-25 and January 1 for the Christmas and New Year's holidays.

To report outages, text OUT to 800.223.4832, use our SmartHub app or call 800.223.4832. Learn more about SmartHub and TextPower at gvec.org.

Get Your

Ugly Christmas Sweater

Ready



The **Guadalupe County Child Welfare Board Supporters (GCCWSB)** are adding some “ugly” to the holidays again this year with their **2nd Annual Ugly Christmas Sweater Dinner Party**. The event starts at **6 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 6, at The Stephen & Mary Birch Texas Theatre, located at 425 North Austin Street, Seguin.**

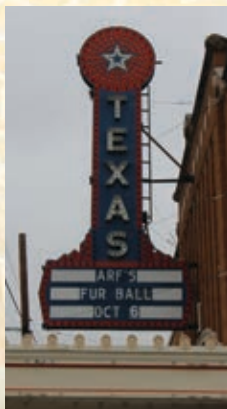
According to GCCWSB President Jack Linden, the 2018 Ugly Sweater Dinner Party will include a silent auction, a brief theatrical presentation and all the ugly Christmas sweaters one could hope for. Linden was confident this year’s event will be bigger than last year’s. “We didn’t have near enough publicity last year,” he said, “but it was still the biggest fundraiser we’ve ever had. This year, we’re doing a lot more to publicize it.”

Linden stressed that the event benefits GCCWSB—a 501c3 entity—and not the Guadalupe County Child Welfare Board (GCCWB) itself.

The distinction is important. The two Boards have identical personnel and both work with children and families already being serviced by Texas Child Protective Services (CPS). GCCWB, however, is funded by county government, while GCCWSB is funded by donations and events like the Ugly Christmas Sweater Dinner Party.

GCCWB, Linden explained, formed GCCWSB as a means of supplemental funding for goods and services that can’t be purchased through GCCWB. GCCWB is limited to items that directly benefit the child—clothes, diapers, food, mattresses, Christmas presents and other items.

This year’s Ugly Sweater **proceeds will help computerize GCCWSB’s “Rainbow Room” at the local CPS office.** This room, Linden explained, is a round-the-clock resource center stocked with both GCCWB and GCCWSB supplies. The room is accessible to CPS caseworkers 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, making it an invaluable resource for neglected and/or abused children. Clothing, school supplies, diapers, formula—all these and much more are available in the Rainbow Room. “The Rainbow Room is a critical resource,” Linden said.



For more information on the 2018 Ugly Christmas Sweater Dinner Party, email childwelfareboard@gmail.com, call 830.660.4857 or visit gccwb.org.



The historic Stephen & Mary Birch Texas Theatre reopened in 2011 after being restored. The facility received GVEC Power Up grants in both 2014 (sound system upgrade) and 2017 (restoration of the theatre marquee).



HAVE YOU PICKED UP YOUR 2019 CALENDAR?

We invite you to launch the New Year with Crowd Pleasin' Cuisine, our 2019 recipe calendar. They're available free of charge at all GVEC Customer Service Centers. But don't procrastinate—they go fast! Previous calendars have featured volunteer fire departments, educators, nonprofits and athletic booster clubs in the GVEC service territory. This year, we're celebrating our GVEC family, serving up recipes that are as close to the heart of GVEC employees as they are delicious. So don't wait, 'cause they're likely to be gone faster than you can say "Happy New Year!"

Nest[®]

Makes GVEC Membership a More Profitable Endeavor

Summer's over for the year, but 2019 is coming and it's not too late to think about "The Rush."

Reward Yourself

We launched Rush Hour Rewards in 2018 as a replacement for GVEC's previous demand response program. Rush Hour is designed to help decrease overall energy consumption on GVEC's grid during peak demand times ("Rush Hours"), which occur June-September. Rush Hour Rewards is GVEC's **BIGGEST** and **BEST** rewards program ever, with our best payouts yet.

How Rush Hour Rewards Works

To participate in Rush Hour Rewards, you need a qualifying Nest Learning Thermostat[®]. Once enrolled, your Nest thermostat will notify you of upcoming Rush Hour events. During the Rush Hour itself, the thermostat will automatically adjust the temperature to reduce overall demand on GVEC's grid.

How Much Does Rush Hour Rewards Pay?

GVEC members earn a one-time \$85 bill credit any time of year by signing up for Rush Hour Rewards. The program also includes a \$30 annual bill credit; however, this is available only to members who sign up before May 31 of the current year. Rush Hour Rewards pays this \$30 credit each year the member participates in the program through Sept. 30.

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Members may sign up for Rush Hour Rewards for each qualifying Nest thermostat installed in their home, with identical rewards for each one.

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SIGN UP BY MAY 31 TO

EARN CREDITS IN 2019

Pumpkin Pound Cake



Donna Nevlud, Cuero Intermediate

Blend oil and sugar, mixing well. Add eggs, one at a time. Add pumpkin and mix well. Sift together dry ingredients and add to the mixture. Bake 1 hour at 350 degrees in a greased and floured tube or Bundt pan. Serve with whipped topping or ice cream.

- 1 cup salad oil
- 3 cups sugar
- 3 eggs
- 2 cups cooked or canned pumpkin (large can)
- 3 cups flour
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 tsp. allspice



Aggie's Dressing

- 2 round, 9-inch cake pans of cornbread
- 1 loaf white bread, toasted
- 3 lbs. ground beef
- 1 stick butter
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 head of celery, including leaves, chopped
- Salt and pepper to taste (Be careful: Broth has salt in it, too.)
- 3-4 Tbsp. ground sage
- 3 eggs, beaten
- 2-3 large cans or boxes chicken broth

Debbie Everett, Ottine VFD

Prepare 2 cake pans of cornbread. Toast the bread. Brown the ground beef. Add butter, onion and celery to the meat mixture and sauté until the vegetables are soft. Add salt and pepper to taste. Crumble cornbread in large roaster-size pan. Wet the bread thoroughly, several pieces at a time and squeeze in your hand to mash it up well. Mix in with the cornbread. Add the ground beef/onion and celery mixture to the cornbread/bread. Mix well. Add more salt and pepper to taste. Add the sage and mix well. Add the beaten eggs, mix well and then add the chicken broth, 2 boxes/cans at a time. Place in greased baking pans and bake at 400 degrees about 1 hour—until golden brown and done inside.

Goliad

Christmas Rendezvous & Trade Fair at the Presidio La Bahia

Dec. 1-2, 2018

Craftsmen, artisans and reenactors will gather at the Presidio La Bahia to trade crafts and wares they've made and collected in a 21st century adaptation of an ancient trade fair! 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. & 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., respectively. Admission: \$4 adults, \$3.50 seniors, \$1 ages 6-11; under 6 is free. Info: 361.645.3752.

Gonzales

Winterfest

Dec. 1-2, 8-9, 2018

Enjoy breakfast with Santa at 9 a.m., Dec. 1, at First Methodist Church of Gonzales, along with Santa's market at 10 a.m., on Firehouse square. The parade of lights through downtown starts later that day at 7 p.m. Winterfest Historic Homes Tours are 2 to 6 p.m. each day, too. Stars in the Village at Pioneer Village is Dec. 1 & 8-9. Info: www.gonzalestexas.com; 888.672.1095.

Shiner

Christmas in the Park

Dec. 6, 2018

Take a magical Christmas walk in the park, with tables of delicacies offered by various organizations, the Christmas wreath lighting, the arrival of Santa Claus and bags of treats for children. Welhausen Municipal Park, 900 Ave. E, Shiner. Info: www.shinertx.com; 361.594.4180.

Cuero

6th Annual Christmas in Downtown

Dec. 7-8, 2018

Visit downtown Cuero from 6 to 7 p.m., Friday and from 12 to 10 p.m., Saturday for two days of Christmas magic! The festivities include ice skating, a dinosaur ride, horse and carriage rides, a trackless train, rock climbing wall, bungee bounce, Snowzilla slide, late night shopping, food, farmers market, live entertainment, Santa's workshop, and more! Info: www.cueromainstreet.com; 361.485.8008.

New Braunfels

Suzy Bogguss' Swingin' Little Christmas

Dec. 13, 2018

Enjoy and take part in the show as Suzy and her 6-piece band play and sing their way through an evening of traditional Christmas songs. Even Scrooges are welcome, as Suzy's holiday show has a way of putting everyone in the Christmas spirit! Info: www.brauntex.org; 830.627.0808.

All dates, times and events are subject to change without notice.



holiday GIFT GUIDE

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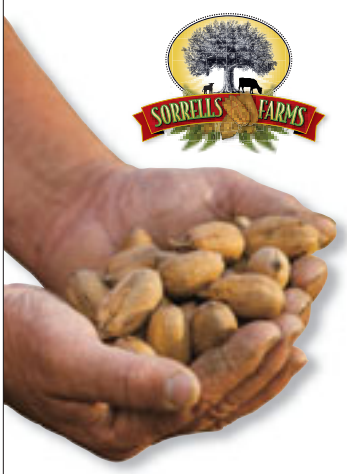
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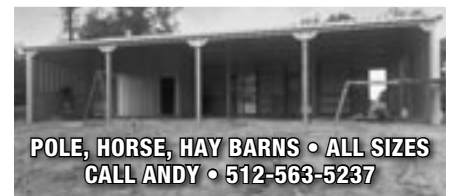
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The Armadillo Strikes Again

Armadillo World Headquarters: from incubator to Austin music legacy

EXCERPT BY EDDIE WILSON
WITH JESSE SUBLETT

DURING ITS REMARKABLE AND UNLIKELY 10-year run, the Armadillo helped nurture and grow an Austin music scene, spreading its gospel around the world. In the 35 years since, the reputation of Austin as a music city has experienced exponential growth, and no small part of that is due to the work we did at Armadillo World Headquarters. Today, Austin is renowned for having an astounding abundance of resident musicians, venues, studios and other essential organs for a thriving music scene infrastructure, along with music festivals that are the envy of the world.

At the Armadillo, we were heavily involved in video production and had been putting performances on cablevision ever since the place opened. In fact, we produced a show called the *Armadillo Country Music Review* in partnership with KLRU, then KLRN, in July 1973 and were involved in various aspects of developing a music series when the TV station decided to produce its own show. Some of my cohort remained involved for a time, even after that show was produced and picked up in 1975 as a series under the name *Austin City Limits*.

In my opinion, AWHQ was quite simply the best music hall in the country—maybe even the whole world. Thousands of musicians played there: Willie Nelson, Frank Zappa, Bruce Springsteen, Taj Mahal, AC/DC, Charlie Daniels, the Ramones, Roy Buchanan and Bette Midler, to name a random few. The interesting thing is that so many of them kept coming back. They loved the place: the acoustics, the people who worked there, the huge nachos and other scrumptious food we served them, and the way the Armadillo



made them feel a part of something bigger.

Another secret to our tenacity might have been our affinity for the lowly nine-banded armadillo. We named the place Armadillo World Headquarters primarily because the anachronistic armored mammal had already been established by Jim Franklin as the icon of the Texas hippies and, as such, we identified with the armadillo for spiritual as well as artistic reasons.

Artists at the University of Texas humor magazine the *Ranger* first began incorporating armadillo images in satirical pieces in the early sixties. Frank Erwin—the head of the UT Board of Regents who was held in special disdain by our community—reacted as if the snide references to the mammal were evidence of some sort of leftist plot or cult, a reaction that naturally inspired even greater demand for armadillo imagery and *Dasyus novemcinctus* itself.

In the late sixties, artists Gilbert Shelton and Jim Franklin pioneered a new visual style and vocabulary for the under-

One of Jim Franklin's iconic posters.

ground scene. Franklin had taken over from Gilbert at the Vulcan Gas Company. Armadillo images figured prominently in their handbills and other work created to promote the venue. Gilbert departed for San Francisco, and the Vulcan folded in 1970, but Franklin dug in his heels in Austin and brought the emerging visual vocabulary and attitude to the Armadillo on day one.

Music historians have also credited the Armadillo with being the place where two previously clashing groups of people—red-necks and hippies—found themselves under the same roof, enjoying a new blend of country music and rock, along with cold beer and cheap pot. The movement was already underway before Willie Nelson played AWHQ, but once he did, he joined our armored mammalian mascot as another icon of the cultural melting pot.

Excerpted from *Armadillo World Headquarters* by Eddie Wilson with Jesse Sublett. Published in 2017 by TSSI Publishing and distributed by University of Texas Press.

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Quick and Easy Holiday Appetizers

HOLIDAYS ARE A TIME OF ABUNDANCE—too much of just about everything except time. As much as I love a cooking project (like rolling out gingerbread cookies or smoking a ham), I'm grateful for timesaving recipes that create something delicious in a flash. I love to kick off a meal with Creamy Kale Toasts, a recipe from my latest cookbook, *Any Night Grilling*. The kale is charred on the grill and then stirred into a luscious spread. The smoky flavor intensifies overnight, so you can make the spread in advance and serve it with grilled bread, whole-grain crackers or crudité—*and a cup of cheer.*

PAULA DISBROWE, FOOD EDITOR

Creamy Kale Toasts

- 1 cup Greek yogurt
 - 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling
 - 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
 - 1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
 - Pinch of red pepper flakes
 - Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
 - ½ cup grated aged goat cheese (such as Cypress Grove Midnight Moon)
 - 1 bunch (12 ounces) lacinato kale
 - 8 thick slices levain or other rustic Italian bread
 - 1 clove garlic, halved lengthwise
- Flaky salt

1. Prepare a charcoal grill for two-zone cooking and build a medium fire, or heat a gas grill to medium-high. Carefully wipe the preheated grill grates with a lightly oiled paper towel. Using a grill brush, scrape the grill grates clean, then carefully wipe with a lightly oiled towel again.
2. In a large bowl, combine the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32



JAMES RANSON | FOOD52

Recipes

Quick and Easy Holiday Appetizers



THIS MONTH'S RECIPE CONTEST WINNER

PATTI GRAFF | MEDINA EC

Use a retro pantry staple—cheese spread—to create this savory baked snack. “My mom included this in a recipe book she compiled and gave to me when I got married 37 years ago,” Graff says. “It’s always a favorite, especially at our annual Christmas brunch.” Assemble the puffs in advance and freeze so you can bake as many as you need at a moment’s notice.

Olive Cheese Puffs

- ½ cup (1 stick) butter, softened
- 1½ cups flour
- 2 jars (5 ounces each) cheese spread
- 50 pitted olives (black olives, manzanillo or a combination)

1. Using a wooden spoon, combine the butter, flour and cheese spread in a mixing bowl (or use cold butter and combine the ingredients in a food processor). When dough is smooth and has a uniform texture, form into 1-inch balls. Flatten each ball and shape the dough around an olive. Place the dough-covered olive on a waxed paper-lined baking sheet. Repeat with remaining dough and olives, then freeze.

Once frozen, place the olives in a sealable plastic bag and store in freezer up to 2 months.

2. To bake, heat oven to 450 degrees. Place the olives on a rimmed baking sheet, spacing them 1 inch apart, and bake 15–20 minutes, until golden and slightly brown on the bottom. Serve the olives warm or at room temperature. ▶ Makes 50 olive cheese puffs.



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\$100 Recipe Contest

May’s recipe contest topic is **Layer Cakes**. What’s the special occasion this month—Mom, bridal shower, graduation? Share the cake that gets rave reviews at your celebrations. The deadline is **December 10**.

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

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

yogurt with the olive oil, lemon juice, zest and pepper flakes. Season with kosher salt and pepper, then fold in the cheese.

3. Working in batches, grill the kale leaves perpendicular to the grates so they won’t fall through. Cook over direct heat until lightly charred, 1–2 minutes on each side. Transfer to a cutting board and cool slightly. Use a knife to trim the thick ribs from each leaf, then finely chop the kale leaves. Fold into the yogurt mixture.

4. Grill the bread over direct heat until charred, about a minute on each side. While still warm, rub one side of each toast with the cut side of the garlic. Top each toast with a layer of the creamy kale and arrange the toasts on a platter. Drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle with flaky salt. ▶ Makes 8 toasts, with leftover spread.

Reprinted from *Any Night Grilling* (Ten Speed Press, 2018)

Two-Ingredient Hummus

CHRISTINA LANE | GRAYSON-COLLIN EC

What could be easier than a delicious dip that calls for only two ingredients? Lane’s creamy, satisfying purée pairs beautifully with pita chips, grilled flatbread or crudités. For the best flavor, taste the mixture after blending and add salt or olive oil as desired.

- 1 can (15 ounces) chickpeas, drained and rinsed
 - 1 jar (6 ounces) marinated artichoke hearts, undrained
- Pita chips, for serving

1. Combine the chickpeas and artichoke in food processor and purée until smooth. Serve with pita chips, if desired. Leftovers can be stored in the refrigerator for up to 3 days. ▶ Makes about 2½ cups.

COOK’S TIP This speedy dip also can be made using canned white beans instead of chickpeas.

Easy Gougères

KIMBERLY MARX | PEDERNALES EC

Gougères are a classic French appetizer made by combining choux pastry with a strongly flavored grated cheese, such as Gruyère, Emmenthal or aged cheddar. They are delicious on their own, crispy and warm from the oven or at room temperature, and with any number of fillings.

- ½ cup whole milk
- ½ cup water
- ½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, cut into 4 pieces
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 cup flour
- 5 eggs, room temperature
- 1½ cups (about 6 ounces) coarsely grated aged cheese (such as Gruyère, Asiago or sharp cheddar)

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Line two baking sheets with silicone baking mats or parchment.

2. Combine the milk, water, butter and salt in a heavy-bottomed medium saucepan over high heat. Whisking constantly, bring the mixture to a rapid boil, then add flour. Lower the heat to medium-low and immediately stir vigorously with a wooden spoon or heavy whisk. The dough will come together, and a light crust will form on the bottom of the pan. Continue stirring another 1–2 minutes to dry dough (at this point it should be very smooth).

3. Turn the dough into a stand mixer (or a large bowl if you're using a hand mixer or wooden spoon). Allow the dough to sit 1–2 minutes, then add the eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition, until the dough is thick and shiny. Make sure each egg is completely mixed in before adding the next. (The dough may separate until the last egg is incorporated.) Beat in the grated cheese, then spoon out immediately.

4. Drop tablespoonfuls of dough onto the prepared baking sheets, leaving a 2-inch space between each. Place baking sheets into oven, immediately reducing temperature to 375 degrees, and bake 12 minutes. Rotate the pans from front to back and top to bottom, and continue baking until the gougères are golden, firm and puffed, another 12–15 minutes. Serve warm or transfer the pans to racks to cool. ▶ Makes about 36 gougères.

COOK'S TIP To prepare them in advance, freeze mounds of the unbaked pastry on a baking sheet. When they're solid, lift off sheet and

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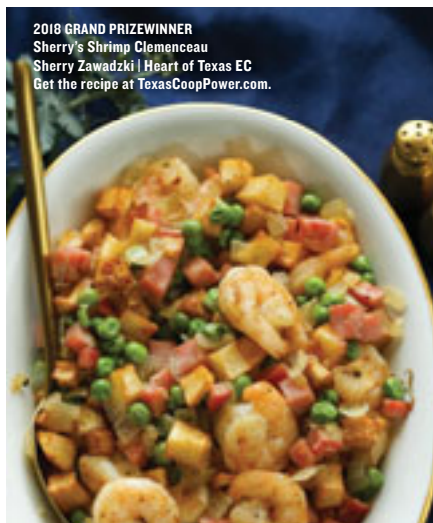
Slather a round of brie with your favorite jelly or jam, wrap with thawed puff pastry and bake at 400 degrees until golden brown.

Top slices of toasted baguette with an herbed cheese spread and cherry tomato halves.

Toss pecans with melted butter, Worcestershire sauce and chopped fresh rosemary, then toast in a 350-degree oven 7–8 minutes, until fragrant.

Drizzle a wedge of blue cheese with honey and serve with toasted walnuts and crackers. —PD

freeze in sealable plastic bags. (Follow the baking instructions, allowing a few more minutes in the oven.) Leftover baked puffs can be stored at room temperature overnight and reheated in a 350-degree oven, or they can be frozen and reheated before serving.



2018 GRAND PRIZEWINNER
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Sherry Zawadzki | Heart of Texas EC
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High Contrast

THIS MONTH, OUR READERS TAKE RISKS with light and shadow and play with every color under the sun to deliver some fantastic shots. **GRACE ARSIAGA**

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



▲ **TWILLA MALKERSON**, Farmers EC: Malkerson's calf on a freezing day in Emory.

▶ **CHARLES CARLSON**, Bandera EC: Cypress tree trunks and roots reflected on the Frio River at Concan.



▲ **THERESA MCKEE**, Fannin County EC: An old gas station painted in funky colors and abandoned under the hot Texas sun.



▲ **JON HOBSON**, Houston County EC: "My son, Isaac, and his friend Sean playing some basketball after a rain shower in Grapeland."



UPCOMING CONTESTS

APRIL MILES AND MILES OF TEXAS DUE DECEMBER 10

MAY ON THE RANCH DUE JANUARY 10

JUNE FEEDIN' TIME DUE FEBRUARY 10

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

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

◀ **SHAHBANU MALAK**, CoServ: "Spotted in my garden one fine morning."

Pick of the Month Sanger High Craft Show

Sanger December 8
(940) 206-0007

The craft show, which goes all day at Sanger High School, includes more than 140 booths featuring unique gifts, Christmas decor, home-made soaps, candles, jewelry and more. The sale benefits the Sanger FFA, Sanger FFA Alumni & Friends and area food banks. Find out more on the event's Facebook page.



ORNAMENT: TANCHES | DREAMTIME.COM. BIRD: DUCKS1000 | DREAMTIME.COM. WINE: S PHOTO | DREAMTIME.COM

December

7

Edinburg Night of Lights, (956) 383-4974, edinburg.com

Victoria [7-8] Bethlehem Village, (361) 573-2232, gracelutheran-tx.org/bethlehem-village

Burnet [7-9, 14-16] Main Street Bethlehem, (512) 756-4481, fbcburnet.org

Ennis [7-8, 14-16, 21-22] *Where's Santa?*, (972) 878-5126, theatrerocks.com

8

Bastrop Holiday Homes Tour, (512) 303-0057, bastropcountyhistoricalsociety.com

Bonham Holiday Open House, (903) 583-5558

Bulverde Living Christmas Drive Though Presentation, (830) 980-2813, redroofchurch.org

Chappell Hill Garden Club Christmas Home Tour, (713) 562-6191, chappellhillgardenclub.com

Garrison Christmas on the Square, (936) 347-2316



December 8
McKinney
Second Saturday
Bird Walk

Johnson City Christmas Through the Years in LBJ Country, (830) 868-7128, nps.gov/lyjo

McGregor Lighted Christmas Parade, (254) 840-2292, mcgregorfoundersday.com

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McKinney Second Saturday Bird Walk, (972) 562-5566, heardmuseum.org

Port Arthur Lighted Cultural Holiday Parade, (409) 983-8105, portarthurtx.gov

Weslaco Santa Dash and Lighted Christmas Parade, (956) 968-2102, weslaco.com

Vernon Christmas on the Western Trail, (940) 553-3766

Washington Christmas on the Brazos, (936) 878-2214, wheretexasbecametexas.org

Brenham [8-9] Holiday Crystal Wine Trail, (979) 836-3696, visitbrenhamtexas.com

Tyler [8-9] Interscholastic Equestrian Association Hunt Seat Show, (903) 882-8696, texasrosehorsepark.com

13

Levelland Fa La La Fun for the Ladies, (806) 894-3157, levelland.com

Palo Pinto Frontier Christmas, (940) 659-3573, palopintohistory.com

14

Fredericksburg [14-15] The Christmas Journey, (830) 997-2069, bethanyfredericksburg.com

San Angelo [14-16] *The Nutcracker*, (325) 284-3825, sanangelopac.org

15

Kilgore Jingle All the Way, (903) 988-4117, kilgoremainstreet.com



December 8-9
Brenham
Holiday Crystal
Wine Trail

Livingston A Polk County Christmas Show, (936) 933-5852, polkcountycommercecenter.com

16

Stonewall LBJ Tree Lighting, (830) 644-2252, tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/lyndon-b-johnson

18

Crockett The Texas Tenors, (936) 544-4276, pwfaa.org

January

5

Bonham Sam Rayburn Day, (903) 583-5558, thc.texas.gov/historic-sites

Kerrville The Fabulous 50s: Romance to Rock 'n' Roll, (830) 792-7469, symphonyofthehills.org

Submit Your Event!

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

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South Texas Riches

Daytrip includes Spanish colonial history, a salt lake and aloe galore

BY EILEEN MATTEI

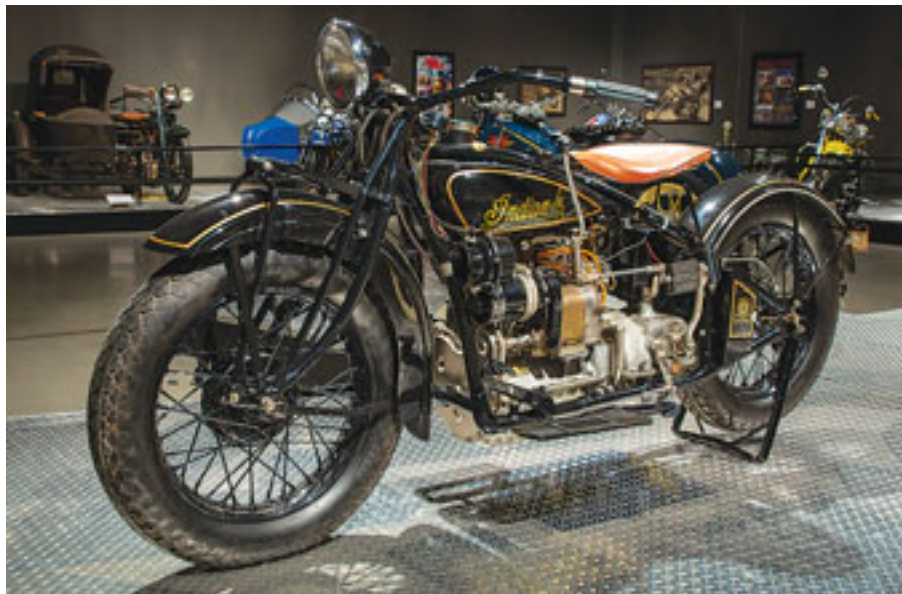
DRIVING FROM EDINBURG, THE HIDALGO County seat in the southern tip of Texas, east to Raymondville, the seat of adjacent Willacy County, requires less than an hour, but the transition covers more than just highway miles. Edinburg bustles with the campus of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley at its heart, while the agricultural community of Raymondville invites you to savor nature and history.

When I spot Martin Aparicio, 14, in the **Museum of South Texas History** in Edinburg, he is wearing replicas of a Spanish helmet and breastplate from the 1600s. His aunt, Veronica Paz, and her daughters critique his fashion sense as he dons a leather tricorne hat and a long, black leather vest in the Spanish colonial hands-on corner. “A hands-on museum like this has more of an impact,” says Paz, who brought the teenagers from Chicago.

The museum promises a stroll through 500 years of South Texas history. I start in the late 1700s and wander through a colonial town inspecting saddles and a beehive stone oven. A few steps and a few decades later, I climb on board a Rio Grande steamboat to the sound of creaking barrels and the splash of a paddle wheel. Still later, I hear lonesome cowboy songs that herald chuck wagons and vaqueros. With World War II approaching, I peer through a German submarine’s periscope trained on a freighter in the Gulf of Mexico.

I leave one museum and head for the **South Texas Motorcycle Museum**, where highly polished motorcycles with sensuously curved fenders preen in spotlights that reflect off diamond-plate flooring and gleaming chrome. Eighty vintage bikes give the impression of sculptural forms.

The majority of the bikes (and the earliest ones do resemble bicycles) are Indians and Harley-Davidsons. A 1913 Indian



A 1931 Indian Four is one of about 80 vintage motorcycles at the South Texas Motorcycle Museum in Edinburg.

racing motorcycle, made without brakes or a transmission, sits near a gorgeous red 1947 Indian Chief, complete with sidecar. The oldest is a 1903 Harley, and the most recognizable may be a Captain America Chopper, a replica of the customized Harley in *Easy Rider*.

“All of them run,” says caretaker Dave Garcia, who owns the motorcycle shop next door.

I head north on Interstate 69C, then drive 4 miles on Texas Highway 186 to **La Sal del Rey**, the smallest of three hypersaline lakes in the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge. A wide gravel path leads a half-mile north to the 530-acre lake, which sparkles like a snowy field.

Since the 1500s, Native Americans, Spanish explorers, ranchers and soldiers have traveled to this deep salt dome for salt to preserve meat and hides. Sandhill cranes and long-billed curlews winter here.

As I walk along the shoreline, dry salt crunches underfoot. Wildlife obviously traipse across the salt-topped mud: Huge nilgai tracks and dainty sharp javelina and bobcat prints are visible. I scoop out a nil-

gai hoofprint and come up with a handful of salt flakes.

At the **Willacy County Historical Museum**, Elva Sayas guides me to Mifflin Kenedy’s La Parra Ranch exhibit. I gawk at the former Rio Grande riverboat captain’s 30-pound bulletproof vest. The 1554 Espiritu Santo shipwreck—the oldest in the U.S., which formed here when the Santo sank along with two Spanish galleons during a storm—resulted in a treasure trove of coins, jewelry and artifacts recovered from county beaches, now displayed here.

I drive on FM 491 to **Hilltop Gardens**, a historical botanical sanctuary where aloe vera has been grown commercially since 1939. Hilltop includes more than 200 species of aloes displayed in climbing, blooming and spiky exuberance. The sensory garden invites you to touch sandpapery anacua leaves, smell jasmine and citronella, and watch butterflies. The healing garden with its reflecting pool, herbs and tropical birds encourages relaxation and reflection on the Valley landscape.

Eileen Mattei, a Nueces EC member, is a Texas master naturalist in Harlingen.

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