

UNEARTHING ARTIFACTS  
IN WEST TEXAS

JUNETEENTH'S LONG PATH  
ACROSS AMERICA

STAUNCH COMPETITOR  
FINALLY WEARS OUT

# Texas Coop Power

FOR SAM HOUSTON EC MEMBERS

JUNE 2023

## Comfort Food

New food editor  
Vianney Rodriguez  
opens her kitchen  
to TCP readers

2022  
ANNUAL  
REPORT

SEE PAGE 17

### PLUS

16 Annual Meeting  
Is June 13

23 Restoring  
Power Safely

23 Scholarships  
Awarded





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# June 2023



08

## Scratching the Surface

West Texas ranchers team up with researchers to unearth pieces of history.

*By Eileen Mattei  
Photos by Dave Shafer*

## 12 'On Juneteenth'

A Pulitzer Prize-winning historian describes the holiday's long path out of her home state.

*Excerpt by Annette Gordon-Reed  
Illustration by John Jay Cabuay*

### ON THE COVER

New food editor Vianney Rodriguez in her studio kitchen, Cocina Gris.  
*Photo by Jason David Page*

### ABOVE

Joey and Laurie Roland show teeth from an extinct three-toed horse at their ranch.  
*Photo by Dave Shafer*

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*By Pam LeBlanc*



# Making Magic With Vianney

**MEET VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ**, the Corpus Christi foodie who will be inviting readers into her kitchen every month as *TCP*'s new food editor. You first met Vianney in December 2020, when she wrote in delicious detail about *pan dulce*.

She fell in love with cooking as a child in Aransas Pass. "Growing up watching my *abuelita* and mami cook together in perfect sync ... They were creating magic. I wanted to be a part of this world and have been cooking ever since."

Vianney—"simply say the letters V-N-A"—started her blog, Sweet Life, in 2009, joining the online conversations that she saw as "mini love letters to food." Her passion kept growing. "I have authored two cookbooks—*Latin Twist*, a cocktail book featuring cocktails from Latin countries, and *The Tex-Mex Slow Cooker*."

Today she works out of her studio kitchen, Cocina Gris—gray kitchen—where she can't wait to dive into more reader recipes from Co-op Country.



“Don’t be told something is impossible. There’s always a way.”

—ROBERT RODRIGUEZ

## FINISH THIS SENTENCE THANKS, DAD, FOR ...

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

Here are some of the responses to our April prompt: **I drove all night to ...**

Find myself *still* in the great state of Texas!

ROXANNE NEWMAN  
VIA FACEBOOK

Be by my mother’s bedside in her final hours.

ELLEN ROZNECK COULTER  
VIA FACEBOOK

Be at the gate when he got a weekend leave.

MARTHA BEIMER  
VIA FACEBOOK

Get back to Texas, and I kissed the ground when I did.

RICHELLE NASH  
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC  
SHERMAN

Get to Concan after heavy spring rains so I could float the Frio.

LISA HOLLOWAY FITZSIMMONS  
VIA FACEBOOK

Visit our website to see more responses.

## QWERTY, USA

When typing while using proper form on a QWERTY keyboard, only two U.S. states' names can be typed using just one hand (overlooking the need for the shift key for capitalization). Texas is one of them. Ohio is the other.



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Holiday Desserts

#### **FOCUS ON TEXAS PHOTOS**

Helping Out

#### **RECOMMENDED READING**

National Egg Day, June 3, reminds us of all the great reader recipes on our website that use eggs—especially those found in *Eggs: Plain and Fancy* from March 2016.



## Welcome Signs

With the arrival of 470,708 people in 2022, Texas became just the second state to surpass 30 million residents—now with 30,029,572. The other one? Well, that would be California, with 39,029,342.

## Super Cool or Old School?

**THE FIRST LP** came out 75 years ago this month, when Columbia released the New York Philharmonic's rendition of Mendelssohn Violin Concerto in E minor as a long-playing record June 21, 1948.

Since then, we've hoarded records, then eight-track and cassette tapes, and compact discs. Those made way for digital files and streaming as our favorite music ended up both in a closet and in the cloud.

But take heart, record geeks: Vinyl albums outsold CDs in 2022 for the second year in a row.





## Grounded in Mystery

“An East Texas minister built an airship that supposedly flew in 1902. It was destroyed before it could fly publicly at the 1904 World’s Fair in St. Louis.”

VAL L. ERWIN  
COSERV  
LANTANA

## 442nd’s Heroism

My father took part in the rescue as a member of an antitank company [*Rescue of the Lost Battalion*, February 2023].

The 442nd suffered 800 casualties rescuing 211 Texans. After the battle, Gen. John E. Dahlquist ordered everyone in formation to congratulate them. He scolded the regimental commander that he wanted *everyone* there. The commander stood at attention and replied, “That’s all that’s left.”

Sidney Miyakawa  
CoServ  
Lewisville

Bless your heart  
[*A Pet Project*, March 2023]. It’s the hardest thing fur parents have to do, but it’s our last, best gift to them. You’ll know when it’s time.

MARY HENDERSON  
HARP  
VIA FACEBOOK

## Sacred Memory

As a boy growing up in north Louisiana, we would go exploring on a small creek near my house [*Caught Cuisine*, February 2023]. Along one stretch of the creek was a very low area that always contained numerous pitcher plants. The local name for the plants was preacher in a pulpit.

John Tubb  
Medina EC  
Houston

## Wreaths Matter

Thanks to TCP’s December 2022 mention [*Wreaths for the Fallen*] of the November 2018 *Circle of Life* article about the impact of Wreaths Across America in Texas. That story helped grow 86 WAA Texas locations to 313 in 2022, with over 250,000 wreaths placed on veterans’ graves. Nationwide, over 2.7 million wreaths were placed at 3,702 locations.

Ellen Fuller  
Bryan Texas Utilities  
Bryan

My dad, Jack Andrews, was a proud member and captain in the 442nd in World War II. The 442nd ended up being the most highly decorated unit for its size and length of service in U.S. military history. The 442nd was also credited as being one of the first to find Dachau and release prisoners.

Bill Andrews  
Big Country EC and Pedernales EC  
Shackelford County and Buda



**TCP WRITE TO US**  
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Austin, TX 78701

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

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# SCRATCHING THE SURFACE

**WEST TEXAS RANCHERS** team up with researchers to unearth artifacts



LEFT Graffiti on the plastered walls of Fountain House at Fort Chadbourne dates to 1870.  
TOP Artifacts, such as this nail, sometimes emerge after rains. ABOVE Rosettes that went on horses' bridles denoting cavalry Company F.





LEFT Garland and Lana Richards outside the restored east barracks at Fort Chadbourne. ABOVE Looking through the walls of the ruins of the west barracks, across the parade grounds and to Fountain House.

**I**n its heyday, more than 150 years ago, Fort Chadbourne housed 450 soldiers. Today, it sits by its lonesome on a desolate rise in West Texas. Six restored limestone buildings and others, crumbling but stabilized, surround the parade grounds.

The inhabitants are long gone, but traces of them remain.

Garland Richards' family has lived on ranchland here, north of Bronte, in rural Coke County, for eight generations. The site includes a former stagecoach stop on the Butterfield Overland Mail Co. route and the remains of the frontier fort, used by the U.S. Army 1852–67.

Richards, a member of Taylor Electric Cooperative, knew history was being lost to time and the elements.

"When I was a kid, there was a waist-high adobe wall here," he says. "In my lifetime, it has melted to ground level."

The Richardses and another West Texas ranching family, knowing their properties hold remarkable history, are trying to stop the destructive march of time, welcoming excavations by archaeologists and paleontologists and

preserving important stories.

In 1999, soon after he inherited the property, Garland and his wife, Lana, set up the nonprofit Fort Chadbourne Foundation and gave the fort to the foundation to preserve and protect it. They marked a grid over an aerial photo and began keeping meticulous records.

"Everything we have found has been recorded on the grid," Richards says. "You do the best you can with the money you have and common sense."

Their first goal was to stabilize the weathered fort buildings, making them safe to work in and around. Lana took grant writing classes and got the needed funding.

"We joined the Concho Valley Archeological Society and let them come," Lana says. "It was one way of learning about what we had." CVAS members under the direction of Larry Riemenschneider, a Concho Valley Electric Cooperative member and volunteer steward with the Texas Historical Commission, began unearthing the fort's past.

The volunteers cost the Richardses a lot of bologna sandwiches, Lana says, but the workers are proud of their part in excavating a frontier fort. I know that's true, because 15 years ago, my husband and I participated in a Fort Chadbourne dig, working alongside a group of military retirees. The painstaking work of troweling and then sifting through the soil removed from meter-square sections was balanced with the joys of minor discoveries and the unsettling real-



ization that humans leave behind a lot of debris.

“We found almost half a million artifacts below the floor of the double officers’ quarters—the dogtrot house where rancher Tom Odom and his wife raised 13 children,” Garland says. In 1877, the Odoms purchased the land from well-known pioneer Mary Maverick and turned the fort into a ranch headquarters.

“The archaeological picture of Fort Chadbourne is probably more complete than any other Texas military site,” Garland says, based on the number of artifacts recovered.

The 12,500-square-foot Fort Chadbourne Visitor Center opened in 2012 to give people a firsthand look at some of the military, ranching and Native American history of West Texas. Half of the center’s exhibits sit inside a spacious walk-in vault with displays of cavalry items uncovered during digs: buckles, spurs, buttons, helmet badges and metal powder flasks along with flattened bullets used as poker chips. A Native American exhibit contains 48 large knife and spear points found near the fort in a foot-square cache that dates back 6,000 years. There’s also a 450-piece antique gun collection and a replica stagecoach.

A walk around the fort and into the buildings puts the center’s displays into perspective. Even in daylight, the quiet creates a haunting atmosphere. Inside the restored Fountain House, bullet holes in its thick, plastered walls shared space with graffiti from 1870 on. After circling the unrestored hospital and the restored barracks, I spotted a rusty, 4-inch sliver of metal on the ground. Garland explained it was a square-headed nail common until 1880 or so. “You’re in the Butterfield stage corral area,” he says. “It’s littered with artifacts.”

Each excavation answers some questions but raises others. Ground-penetrating radar has revealed a building that isn’t mapped.

If you discover archaeological treasures on your land, contact your local archaeological society, Lana recommends. “We did this correctly, thanks to Larry’s help,” she says.

## Millions of Years Away

**WHILE** exploring family property near Snyder, about 80 miles northwest of Bronte, Tina Roland came across large bones eroding out of a gully. Determined to find somebody who could identify the bones, Roland contacted Eileen Johnson, professor of museum science and a paleobiologist at Texas Tech University.

When Johnson went to Snyder in 2005 to see the discovery, she found herself looking at bones dating from 1.8 to 2.6 million years ago, a time known as the Early Pleistocene. The gully marked an ancient stream bed.

“We knew this was important and exciting. We’re still working 17 years later,” Johnson says. “There are a handful



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Laurie and Joey Roland inside the 15-foot-deep paleontological dig site at Roland Springs Ranch. Graduate student assistant Madison Westfall tends to specimens from the ranch that are filed at the Museum of Texas Tech University. An ancient tortoiseshell recovered from the ranch.







of Early Pleistocene sites in the country of this age, but none has this diversity of species or is so well preserved.”

Numerous wading birds, camels, rabbits, giant tortoises and ancestors of coyotes, mountain lions and prairie dogs lived here once. Fossils have revealed the first appearance of some animals and the last appearance of others. Microbiological material excavated with the bones gives clues about the ancient plant community and climate.

The paleontological site is 15 feet deep and measures approximately 30 feet by 30 feet. For six weeks each summer, a small international crew trowels up dirt and washes the sediment through a fine mesh screen. Joey Roland, Tina’s son, and Joey’s wife, Laurie, host the field camp, providing small cabins next to their house and pool. “They are both very much involved,” Johnson says.

“I’m not a paleontologist, but they’ve taught us so much, mostly during talks around the pool after work,” says Joey,

a member of Big Country Electric Cooperative. “A random bone is exciting, but it doesn’t tell a story. It’s out of context. For us, this is fascinating. I love it, and I’ve fought tooth and nail to protect it.”

With doggedness, he managed to get an oil pipeline diverted around the site. Unlike archaeological sites, no federal or state laws protect paleontological sites.

Laurie loves the picture that the finds suggest: huge Galapagos-like tortoises roaming the West Texas grasslands about 2 million years ago with tiny, three-toed horses grazing nearby. She is thrilled to sometimes find prehistoric bones on the surface after a rain. “Humans have never seen or touched them,” she says. “How could you not know that’s special?”

The Rolands share their findings with their community, allowing the Scurry County Museum in Snyder to offer seasonal public tours at the site. The museum has a temporary exhibit of casts made of the finds. The Museum of Texas Tech’s Roland Springs Ranch materials are part of ongoing lab research and not currently viewable by the public.

“Joey and Laurie are the first and only landowners I know with the willingness to let people on their land,” Johnson says.

“It’s selfish not to let them come to the site,” Laurie says. “Texas is about hospitality.”

Texas has millions of years of buried history—giant mammoths, dinosaurs, oyster reefs, frontier trails. Does that make you wonder what could be in your backyard? ■





# ‘On Juneteenth’

A Pulitzer Prize-winning historian describes the holiday’s long path out of Texas

**TO MY SURPRISE** some years back, I began to hear people outside of my home state, Texas, talk about, and *actually celebrate* the holiday “Juneteenth.” June 19, 1865, shortened to “Juneteenth,” was the day that enslaved African Americans in Texas were told that slavery had ended, two years after the Emancipation Proclamation had been signed, and just over two months after Confederate General Robert E. Lee had surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox. Despite the formal surrender, the Confederate army had continued to fight on in Texas until mid-May. It was only after they finally surrendered that Major General Gordon Granger, while at his headquarters in Galveston, prepared General Order Number 3, announcing the end of legalized slavery in the state.

The truth is, I confess here, that I was initially annoyed, at least mildly so, when I first heard that others outside of Texas claimed the holiday. But why? After all, it was a positive turn in history, evidence that our country was leaving behind, or attempting to, a barbarous institution that had blighted the lives of millions. Such a thing should be celebrated far and wide.

My twinge of possessiveness grew out of the habit of seeing my home state, and the people who reside there, as special. The things that happened there couldn’t have happened in other places. Non-Texans could never really understand what the events that took place in Texas actually meant. I am certain that I’m not alone in this attitude.

From my earliest days, it was drummed into me and, I believe, other young people growing up in Texas at that time, that we inhabited a unique place that we were always supposed to claim, and of which we were always supposed to be proud. I’ve noticed over the years, that it is hard to meet a person from Texas who does not, at some point in the conversation, let you know, either with a drawl or without, that he or she is from the state.

My proprietary attitude about Juneteenth quickly disappeared. Rather than keeping the holiday to ourselves, Texans have been in the forefront of trying to make Juneteenth a national holiday. As I think of it, it’s really a very Texas move to say that something that happened in our

state was of enough consequence to the entire nation that it should be celebrated nationwide.

It has been offered, as part of the justification, that the end of slavery in Texas was the end of the institution period. That’s not quite true. Granger’s order did not end slavery in the country. That did not happen officially until December 1865, when the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution was ratified by the necessary number of states. But it is significant that Texas was the site of the tail end of the Confederate war effort. As the war had been fought to preserve slavery, celebrating Juneteenth throughout the land is a fitting way to mark the end of that effort.

It also is fitting to think of Texas in relation to the nation for another reason. The state has been described as a bellwether for what the United States will become; the term “Texification” has come into use to describe a process that is, supposedly, of recent origin.

The history of Juneteenth, which includes the many years before the events in Galveston and afterward, shows that Texas, more than any state in the Union, has always embodied nearly every major aspect of the story of the United States of America. That fact has been obscured by broad caricatures of the state and its people, caricatures that Texans themselves helped to create and helped make the state seem exotic, almost foreign to the rest of the Union.

My Texas roots go deep—on my mother’s side back to the 1820s, on my father’s side at least to the 1860s. Significantly, my wide-ranging approach to Juneteenth reveals that behind all the broad stereotypes about Texas is a story of Indians, settler colonialists, Hispanic culture in North America, slavery, race, and immigration. It is the American story, told from this most American place. ■

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## JUNETEENTH

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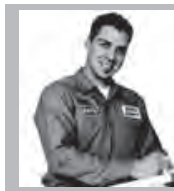


Based on an 1818 painting that depicts John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and Ben Franklin presenting a draft of the Declaration of Independence

## A D V E R T I S E M E N T

# Clogged, Backed—up Septic System...Can anything Restore It?

**DEAR DARRYL:** My home is about 10 years old, and so is my septic system. I have always taken pride in keeping my home and property in top shape. In fact, my neighbors and I are always kidding each other about who keeps their home and yard nicest. Lately, however, I have had a horrible smell in my yard, and also in one of my bathrooms, coming from the shower drain. My grass is muddy and all the drains in my home are very slow.



Dear  
Darryl

My wife is on my back to make the bathroom stop smelling and as you can imagine, my neighbors are having a field day, kidding me about the mud pit and sewage stench in my yard. It's humiliating. I called a plumber buddy of mine, who recommended pumping (and maybe even replacing) my septic system. But at the potential cost of thousands of dollars, I hate to explore that option.

I tried the store bought, so called, Septic treatments out there, and they did Nothing to clear up my problem. Is there anything on the market I can pour or flush into my system that will restore it to normal, and keep it maintained?

*Clogged and Smelly – Lubbock, TX*

**DEAR CLOGGED AND SMELLY:** As a reader of my column, I am sure you are aware that I have a great deal of experience in this particular field. You will be glad to know that there IS a septic solution that will solve your back-up and effectively restore your entire system from interior piping throughout the septic system and even unclog the drain field as well. **SeptiCleanse® Shock and Maintenance Programs** deliver your system the fast active bacteria and enzymes needed to liquefy solid waste and free the clogs causing your back-up.

This fast-acting bacteria multiplies within minutes of application and is specifically designed to withstand many of today's anti-bacterial cleaners, soaps and detergents. It comes in dissolvable plastic packs, that you just flush down your toilets. It's so cool. Plus, they actually Guarantee that it restores ANY system, no matter how bad the problem is.

**SeptiCleanse® Shock and Maintenance Programs** are designed to work on any septic system regardless of design or age. From modern day systems to sand mounds, and systems installed generations ago, I have personally seen SeptiCleanse unclog and restore these systems in a matter of weeks. I highly recommend that you try it before spending any money on repairs. SeptiCleanse products are available online at **[www.septicleanse.com](http://www.septicleanse.com)** or you can order or learn more by calling toll free at 1-888-899-8345. If you use the promo code "TXS19", you can get a free shock treatment, added to your order, which normally costs \$169. So, make sure you use that code when you call or buy online.



# The Bracelets That Italy Can't Get Enough Of

Own the jewelry that's the toast of Italy

*Raffinato™*  
— Italy



*"The renown of Italy's jewelry, with its sensual beauty and extraordinary craftsmanship, is founded on the goldsmithing skills passed down through generations." – The New York Times*

A.



B.



I guess I was a little bored. For the past hour, I'd been on the phone with Daniele, the head of my office in Italy, reviewing our latest purchases of Italian gold, Murano glass and Italian-made shoes and handbags.

"Daniele," I said, "What is the hottest jewelry in Italy right now?"

His reply? Woven gold bracelets studded with gems. He texted me some photos and I knew immediately that this was jewelry that Raffinato just had to have.

## RAFFINATO IS ONE OF AMERICA'S LARGEST RETAILERS OF ITALIAN-MADE JEWELRY

Presenting the Italiano Fantasia Bracelets, two designs that are prime examples of Italy's finest artisanship. Each of these bracelets includes more than 20 brilliant cut gems of DiamondAura®, our Ultimate Diamond Alternative®, in a setting finished with 18 karat Italian gold.

What is DiamondAura®? Why, it's a sparkling marvel that rivals even the finest diamonds (D Flawless) with its transparent color and clarity: Both are so hard they can cut glass. Don't believe me? The book "Jewelry and Gems: The Buying Guide," praised the technique used in our diamond alternative: "The best diamond simulation to date, and even some jewelers have mistaken these stones for mined diamonds," it raved.

The best part about these bracelets? The price. Because of our longstanding connections in Arezzo, the mecca of Italian goldsmithing, we can offer both bracelets together for just \$99, a fraction of the price you'll pay anywhere else for similar jewelry.

Order today. These bracelets are one of our hottest sellers this year, and with disruptions in the supply chain, we can only guarantee that we have ~~1,273~~ 861 of these bracelets on hand for this ad.

Make the next gift you give your loved one a trip to Italy with the Italiano Fantasia Bracelets, stunning accessories that are sure to turn heads.

### Jewelry Specifications:

- Made in Arezzo, Italy. 18k gold finish
- DiamondAura®, the Ultimate Diamond Alternative®
- Fit wrists up to 7 1/4"

### Italiano Fantasia Bracelet Collection

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| A. X Bracelet (1/4 ctw)     | <del>-\$399</del> \$59* + S&P <b>Save \$340</b> |
| B. Woven Bracelet (1/3 ctw) | <del>-\$299</del> \$59* + S&P <b>Save \$240</b> |
| Set of Both                 | <del>-\$698</del> \$99* + S&P <b>Save \$599</b> |

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

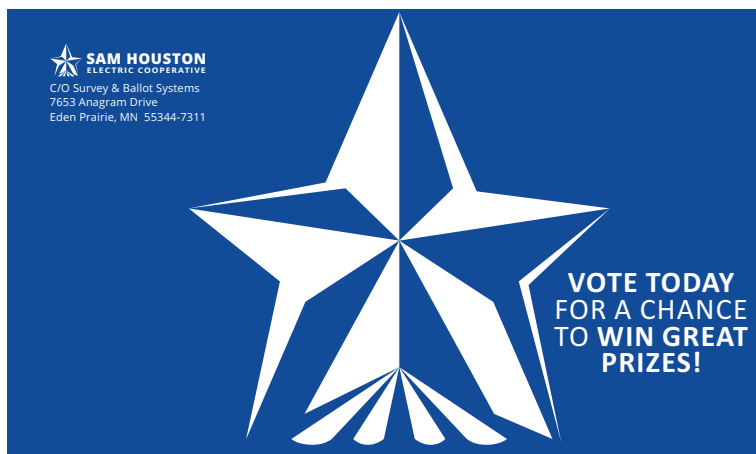
**1-888-444-5949**

**Your Insider Offer Code: RFX205-01**

Raffinato, 14101 Southcross Drive W., Ste 155, Dept. RFX205-01, Burnsville, MN 55337 [www.raffinatoitaly.com](http://www.raffinatoitaly.com)

**Raffinato™** | IMPECCABLE ITALIAN DESIGN AND CRAFTSMANSHIP





## Join Us for Sam Houston EC's Annual Meeting June 13

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR** for the Sam Houston Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting of Members, which will be held Tuesday, June 13.

For the first time since 2019, the meeting will take place in person at the Polk County Commerce Center in Livingston. The facility is located at 1017 U.S. Highway 59 N. Loop, with an entrance at Joe Pedigo City Park. Shuttles will be available to take attendees from the parking area to the facility. Doors will open at noon for registration, and the meeting will begin at 1:30 p.m.

"We are looking forward to seeing our member-owners in person this year," said Rachel Hawkins, chief communications officer. "The Co-op's employees are excited to host the annual meeting of members in person again."

Members who attend the meeting will be able to visit with other member-owners, as well as meet the board of directors and members of the Cooperative's management team. Walter Plant will provide musical entertainment, and a door prize drawing will be held. Cooperative managers will report on Co-op business, including the announcement of board election winners. Board election ballots were distributed to the membership in May. Members can vote for the board of directors by mail-in ballot or online. A quorum of 10% is required to elect directors.

Sam Houston EC members received a paper ballot and may return their ballot by mail if they prefer. Members can also follow the online voting instructions that accompanied the mailed ballot. Electronic (online) and mail-in voters will be eligible for prize drawings at the meeting. To be officially counted, ballots must be received, either online or by mail, no later than 10 a.m. June 12.

We'll see you at the annual meeting! ■

### POWER TIP

Keep high-power water guns away from power lines. If water contacts a power line, electricity can travel down the stream of water and right back to you.

TODOR TSIVETKOV | ISTOCK.COM



### MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**Sam Houston EC Annual Meeting**  
Tuesday, June 13

**Flag Day**  
Wednesday,  
June 14

**Father's Day**  
Sunday, June 18

**Juneteenth**  
Monday, June 19

**Forgiveness Day**  
Monday, June 26

FIZKES | ISTOCK.COM





**POWERING COMMUNITIES**  
**IMPROVING LIVES**  
**SERVING WITH EXCELLENCE**



**SAM HOUSTON**  
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

# **ANNUAL REPORT 2022**

# A LETTER FROM OUR CEO



The last few years have brought unique challenges to our membership, our industry and our world. However, your Cooperative and its employees have met every challenge and found new opportunities to improve your quality of service. We have a lot to be proud of at Sam Houston Electric Cooperative.

Last year, your Co-op continued to navigate the impacts of Winter Storm Uri. The storm resulted in electric utilities having to pay significantly higher costs for power delivered to consumers. Sam Houston EC was able to minimize the effect of our costs by repaying our share of storm costs over five years. The costs of the storm are impacting the average residential member's bill approximately \$6.72 per month.

Natural gas is the primary fuel source for generating electricity in Texas, including Sam

Houston EC. In 2022, natural gas prices were unexpectedly high, which in turn increased the cost of electricity. A survey of Texas electricity rates in June 2022 showed Sam Houston EC's power costs were significantly lower than most of the rates statewide. The Co-op's cost of \$150.15 for 1,000 kilowatt-hours was substantially lower than the average cost of \$256.53 in the Houston region as well as the state average of \$179.51.

We are thankful that the impacts on our Co-op members were much less than in other parts of the state, and we appreciate our members' overwhelming support. Sam Houston EC continues to focus on protecting members from volatile energy prices. We are exploring every available option for reducing our long-term power costs to you.

For instance, our generation and transmission provider, East Texas Electric Cooperative, has recently added natural gas generating capacity in Montgomery County and the Hecate Energy Independence Solar Farm has recently come online inside of our local footprint.

At Sam Houston EC, we hold employee safety and member service in the highest regard. Our employees and board of directors constantly look for ways to safely improve service. I hope you will take the time to look through our annual report and see some of the projects that we have undertaken. These are all done to better serve you.

To help you more easily manage your own usage, we recommend that members monitor their energy consumption by using the mySamHouston app or our web portal. These platforms were designed to increase the information that is available in a timely manner and allow each member to take measures to reduce their energy use. We've also recently added daily consumption graphs to the back of bills so every member can see how and when they consume electricity. We understand that every cost

***"Your Cooperative and its employees have met every challenge and found new opportunities to improve your quality of service."***



matters, especially in tough economic times like we are experiencing today. We are committed to helping you keep your monthly bill as low as possible.

I want to close this letter by sharing good news about the cost of electricity. Electricity costs from our power supplier have been reduced in April and May 2023 due to a decrease in the wholesale cost of electricity. As a not-for-profit electric cooperative, Sam Houston EC passes wholesale power cost savings to our consumer-members. That's how co-ops are different from other businesses.

Sam Houston Electric Cooperative will continue to focus on the best interests of our members by providing reliable electricity and excellent service. I invite you to read the 2022 annual report to see the exciting initiatives implemented by your Cooperative employees last year.

Thank you again for allowing us to serve you.

Sincerely,

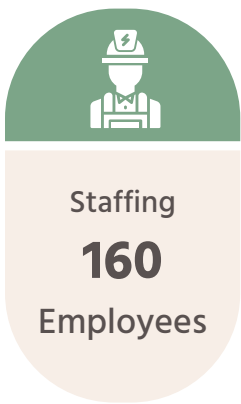
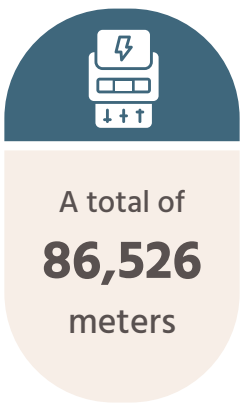
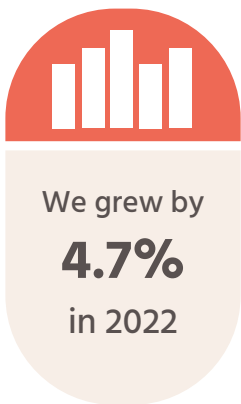
Doug Turk, P.E.  
General Manager & CEO



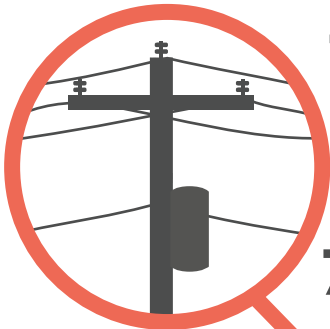
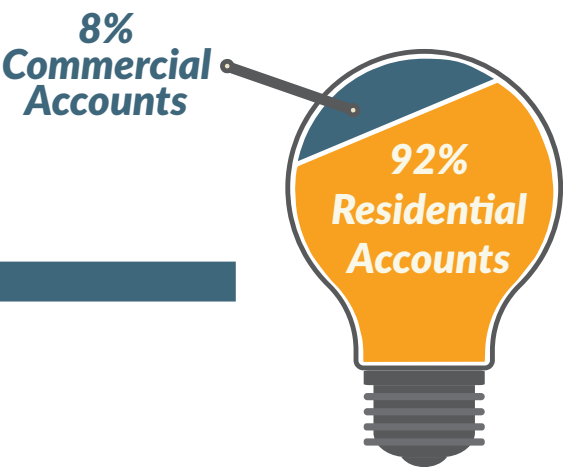
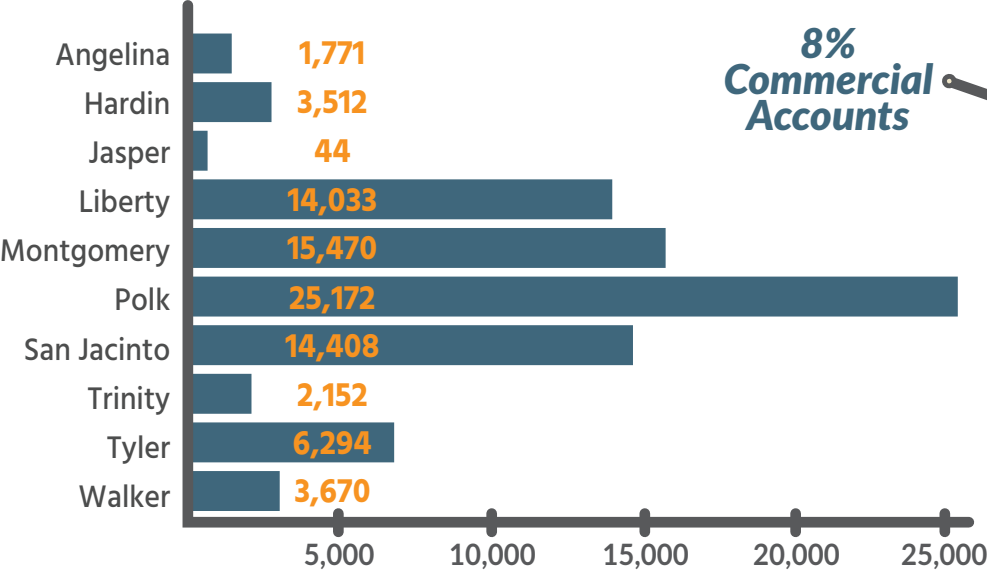
***“Sam Houston Electric Cooperative will continue to focus on the best interests of our members by providing reliable electricity and excellent service.”***



# BY THE NUMBERS



## METERS BY COUNTY



**7,000** Miles of above-ground lines  
1,400 miles underground

**177,211** Poles


**71,201** Transformers







mySamHouston App  
36,000 devices



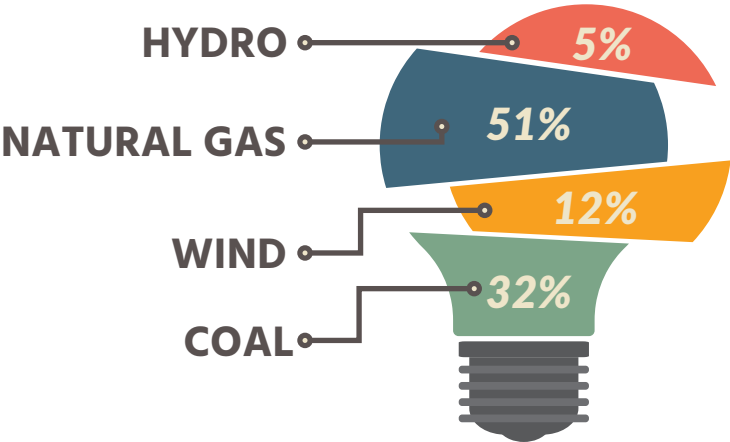
mySamHouston Portal  
67% of members



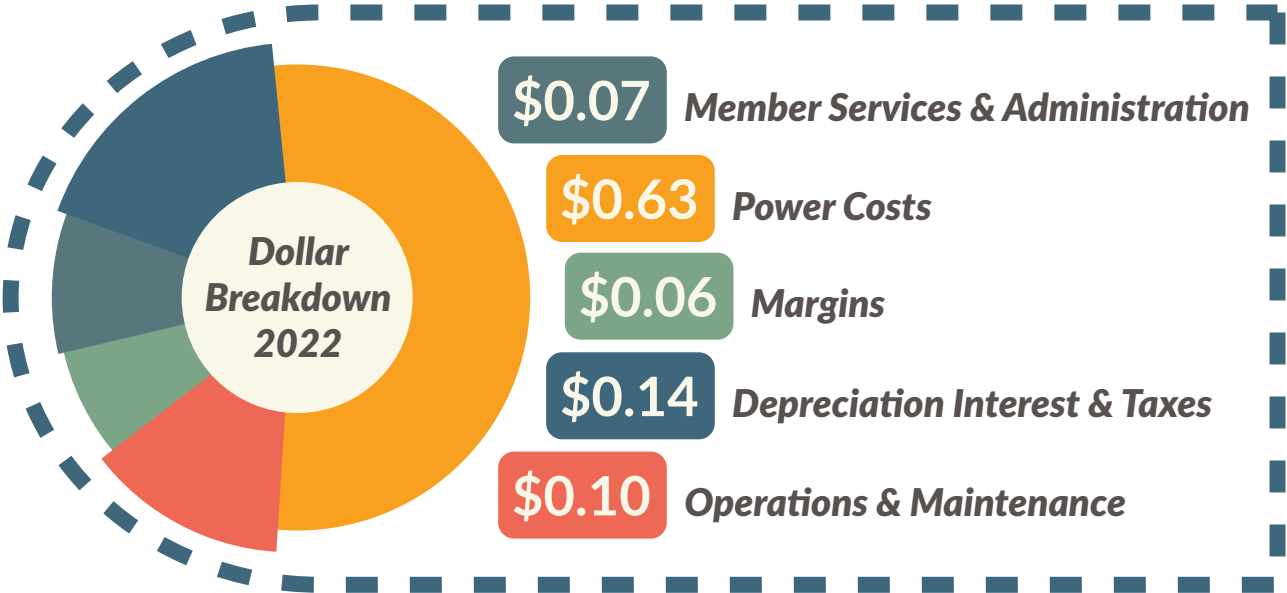
### EASY PAYMENTS

MORE THAN 400  
PAY SITES IN  
EAST TEXAS  
THROUGH OUR  
PARTNERS FIDELITY  
EXPRESS AND  
VANILLA DIRECT





# POWER PORTFOLIO 2022





# COMMUNITY



## Serving the Community

Sam Houston Electric Cooperative is driven by seven cooperative principles that come down to one focus: community. Many Sam Houston EC employees are also Co-op members who live in the rural communities the Co-op serves.

Employees give back by donating to our Helping Hands program. They voluntarily donate a portion of their paychecks to the program, and many employees make an additional donation via their Co-op electric bill each month. The funds are distributed to members in need of bill assistance.

Helping Hands has dispersed over \$490,000 since its creation and over \$16,000 in 2022 alone. Members can also join Helping Hands by contributing on their bills.



Sam Houston Electric Cooperative's scholarship program has helped nearly 800 local students to the tune of more than \$1.5 million since its beginning in 1992.

Each year, Sam Houston Electric Cooperative awards scholarships to high school seniors whose parents or guardians are active consumer-members of the Cooperative. The money that funds the scholarship program comes from unclaimed capital credits that are returned to the Cooperative by the State of Texas and earmarked for scholarships.

In 2022, Sam Houston EC awarded \$81,000 in scholarships to 30 graduating seniors. This is one of the Co-op's most impactful programs, and it comes with a great deal of work. Many of the Sam Houston EC board members and employees voluntarily give up evenings in May to go to high schools in our area and present the scholarships in person to the students. Ultimately, these employees, and the others who have helped this program in the past, see it as an important investment in the future of East Texas.

The Co-op also participated in countless community events, such as festivals, parades, 4-H and FFA shows as well as youth rodeos.

"I think these are great events that allow us to engage with our community as a whole," said Daniel Hilton, technical support specialist. "Whether you're a member or not, we are all a family, something I feel the Co-op truly embodies. We showed that we care and that we want to support our youth, their families and future members."



***"Whether you're a member or not, we are all a family, something I feel the Co-op truly embodies. We showed that we care and that we want to support our youth, their families and future members."***

# EMPLOYEES

## Retirements, Promotions and New Hires

Employees come and go in all businesses, but employees stay at Sam Houston Electric Cooperative because it's simply a wonderful place to serve and be a part of something special. When your Cooperative witnessed several retirements in 2022, more than 430 years of experience walked out the door one last time.

The Co-op appreciates the dedication of Curtis Allen, David Babcock, Jimmy Bond, Virgil Cain, Jeff Green, Terresa Langston, Tina Montalvo, Sherry Overstreet, Bo Richardson, Keith Stapleton and Bill Townley who retired in 2022. Each left indelible marks at the Co-op and with consumer-members.

Most companies would struggle to replace the amazing employees who retired, but Sam Houston EC is prepared to continue providing the same exceptional service members expect and deserve. Ongoing career training for employees, diligent planning and hiring great people have positioned the Co-op to continue its history of excellence.

"Our employees are our greatest asset. The people we ultimately choose to hire are directly linked to Sam Houston EC's overall success," said Dana Massey, director of administration. "The process is a collaborative effort, and there is no tried-and-true formula for hiring the perfect person every time. It's not always about the skillset a person has; we take into consideration a person's character, attitude, integrity and work ethic. Our goal is hiring people who add value to Sam Houston EC."

Hiring good people is only the start for Sam Houston EC employees. All positions require a significant amount of on-the-job training. Member service representatives need several months of training before becoming fully equipped to serve members with excellence.

"We do our best to make sure the new member services representatives feel prepared and that they are contributing," said Tami Ross, member service representative and trainer. "It's also important that the current MSRs have confidence that we've done our job as trainers, and they are getting good coworkers."

All Co-op employees are encouraged to take accredited courses from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and to attend conferences so future generations of Sam Houston EC employees can add to the legacy of great service.



***"Our employees are our greatest asset. The people we ultimately choose to hire are directly linked to Sam Houston EC's overall success."***



# RELIABILITY



## System Reliability Increases With Meter Growth

Sam Houston Electric Cooperative continued several projects throughout 2022 that improved the reliability of an electricity distribution system the approximate size of Connecticut.

The almost 5% growth in meters in 2022 is great for the eighth-largest electric cooperative in Texas. However, the tremendous growth also creates challenges on how to increase the reliability of the system.

The Co-op broke ground on construction of the Plum Grove substation in 2022. The substation will improve reliability to members in the southern portion of the service area by reducing voltage fluctuations and potential outages. This area is currently served by a seven-mile-long distribution line that passes through remote areas, making restoration efforts more difficult.

The Yukon Feeder Automation project expanded throughout the Co-op's southern area. YFA is best described as an automated self-healing grid system that isolates outages to the fewest number of meters without human intervention.

According to Engineer Connor Jenewein, a member may experience an outage of less than a few minutes as the self-healing technology redirects power from another source and ends the outage. Before YFA was installed in their area, those same members may have been without power for hours.

A voltage conversion project at the Rye substation expanded YFA capabilities by allowing three substations to be interconnected. Sam Houston EC and contractors manually changed the voltage on hundreds of pole-mounted transformers fed from the Rye substation, in addition to making changes within the substation to complete the project.

The Cooperative's Reliability Task Force is analyzing areas that would be a good fit for YFA implementation in the future.

***“A member may experience a short outage... Before YFA was installed in their area, those same members may have been without power for hours.”***

# HIGH GROWTH EXPECTED

## People Are Moving to Co-op Country

In 2022, Sam Houston Electric Cooperative's membership continued a steady increase, especially in Liberty and Montgomery Counties.

The overall proximity to Houston is driving considerable growth. More and more people want to move out of big cities to raise families in the rural areas of East Texas. This desire and the opening of the Grand Parkway East in Liberty County are the main causes for the Co-op's growth.

Services in Liberty County have experienced a growth rate of almost 11 percent in recent years. As more families move out of the city, the growth in the Co-op's service areas will continue to expand. The Co-op is also seeing membership growth in other portions of the service area, such as Polk, Montgomery and San Jacinto counties.

"The challenge with rapid growth is the cost of infrastructure to build new services," said Joe Conner, chief financial officer. "Price pressure on materials and higher interest rates result in growth being both a blessing and a challenge."

The increase in membership leads to increased density of meters, which is good for the Co-op and its members. Increased meter density leads to decreased cost per meter to maintain the distribution system.

As meter growth continues, more revenue follows. Increased revenue will support investments as the Co-op continues to serve more subdivisions today and beyond. The Co-op is prepared to continue serving new members with the same excellence that longtime members receive and expect from the Co-op in the Pineywoods.



*The increased membership leads to increased density of meters, which is good for the Co-op and members.*



# ACSI HIGHER THAN EVER

## Sam Houston EC Earns Highest Customer Satisfaction Score in History

The American Customer Satisfaction Index gives Sam Houston Electric Cooperative an insight into its members perception of performance.

The ACSI score points to the Co-op's many strengths and provides feedback on opportunities for improvement. The Co-op's ACSI score of 92.5 for 2022 was the highest in the Co-op's history. It just edged the 2021 score by a fraction of a point.

The score is calculated by an independent survey company. Cooperative members are chosen randomly to respond to a phone survey. The members are asked four questions to rate on a scale from 1-10: How satisfied are you with Sam Houston EC? To what extent does Sam Houston exceed your expectations? How close is Sam Houston EC to the ideal electric company? If given a choice, how likely is it that you would choose Sam Houston EC?

"It is important we survey our members because it shows us how we are doing and what we need to improve on, which is essential to the Co-op," said Ricky Harrell, chief member services officer.



# CYBERSECURITY

Sam Houston Electric Cooperative employees work to protect every consumer-member's information and its electrical distribution system.

Employees are regularly trained on security best practices set by the North American Electric Reliability Corporation, the payment card industry and the U.S. government. The training helps employees identify threats and common scam tactics.

Multifactor authentication is used to further secure devices and access to information on the Cooperative's system. This is when a user must enter both a password and a second form of identification. Furthermore, employees can access only the necessary portions of data to complete their specific work tasks.

Co-op physical locations and digital presences are actively monitored around the clock for any malicious activity. These protocols result in industry-leading efforts to keep information private and secure.





# SAFETY

## Safety Culture Top Priority on the Job and at Home

Safety is the number one priority of Sam Houston Electric Cooperative. Even in the toughest of situations, safety for Co-op employees and consumer-members is our primary focus.

The Co-op's training facility hosts several classes throughout the year. Instructors from Texas Electric Cooperative's Loss Control and Sam Houston EC share knowledge with attendees. Hosting the courses throughout the year allows the Co-op to work with other co-ops to reduce training costs, while advancing employee knowledge and skills.

"We recognize our employees are the best asset we have," said Gary White, director of safety and training. "It only makes sense to provide training so they can be the best they can be, and be safe doing it. We owe that to them, the Cooperative and our members."

Safety goals and processes are driven by all employees at the Co-op. Frontline employees from all departments serve on Continuous Improvement teams that evaluate specific processes for improvement. The Safety Steering Team is comprised of frontline employees, managers and an executive, and helps guide the CI teams. The Safety Committee meets to review any accidents and propose safe practices moving forward.

The Co-op's office employees do not face the same hazards and dangers as the Co-op's linemen and other employees who primarily work outside. They also don't put in the miles on the road like our foresters or utility designers. However, safety is a culture and one that all employees participate in to create a true safety culture.

"It is not only important for our office employees to understand the hazards faced by our outside employees every day, but they also must understand workplace and home safety as well," said James Walker, head of the safety steering committee and member services supervisor. "Our goal is that everyone makes safety-conscious decisions at work as well as at home to ensure that we are best we can be for our families and consumer-members."



# GUIDED BY OUR MEMBERS



## Director Districts

### District 1

Angelina, Polk and Trinity Counties

### District 2

San Jacinto County

### District 3

Tyler and Jasper Counties

### District 4

Hardin and Liberty Counties

### District 5

Montgomery and Walker Counties

The board of directors provides policy development, oversight and management across one of the largest electric cooperatives in Texas and the country as we mark 83 years of service. Made up of dedicated and engaged Cooperative members, the board is keenly aware of what is important to our consumer-members because they are members too. To ensure equal representation for each of our more than 65,000 members, the Co-op's service area is divided into five districts. Mr. Robert Boyd, from Tyler County, serves as board president. The Co-op's 11 directors are elected by their fellow members to serve in the overall best interests of the Cooperative and all its members.



**MIKE OLDNER**  
DISTRICT 1



**CASEY EVANS DAVIS**  
DISTRICT 1



**GARY JENKE**  
DISTRICT 2



**KATHERINE HARDIN**  
DISTRICT 4



**W.E. "ERNE" MILES**  
DISTRICT 5



**DON BOYETT**  
DISTRICT 1



**MILTON PURVIS**  
DISTRICT 1



**JAMES ELMORE**  
DISTRICT 2



**ROBERT C. BOYD**  
DISTRICT 3



**CHUCK TURNER**  
DISTRICT 4



**JIM SEALE**  
DISTRICT 5



# FINANCIALS

## CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEETS

December 31, 2022 and 2021

### ASSETS

2022

2021

#### Utility Plant:

|                           |               |                |
|---------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Electric plant in service | \$637 193 039 | \$ 598 946 595 |
|---------------------------|---------------|----------------|

|                          |            |            |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|
| Construction in progress | 25 978 231 | 13 894 390 |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|

|  |             |             |
|--|-------------|-------------|
|  | 663 171 270 | 612 840 985 |
|--|-------------|-------------|

|                                |             |             |
|--------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Less: accumulated depreciation | 234 783 230 | 219 212 744 |
|--------------------------------|-------------|-------------|

|                   |             |             |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|
| NET UTILITY PLANT | 428 388 040 | 393 628 241 |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|

|  |            |            |
|--|------------|------------|
| Investments in associated organizations, at cost | 78 624 281 | 74 898 387 |
|--|------------|------------|

#### Current Assets:

|                           |           |           |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Cash and cash equivalents | 7 020 469 | 6 781 419 |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|

|                  |         |         |
|------------------|---------|---------|
| Restricted funds | 958 328 | 984 738 |
|------------------|---------|---------|

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| Accounts receivable (less provision for doubtful accounts |  |  |
|---|--|--|

|   |            |            |
|---|------------|------------|
| of \$139,837 in 2022 and \$106,573 in 2021) | 28 250 319 | 20 100 563 |
|---|------------|------------|

|  |         |         |
|--|---------|---------|
| Materials and supplies (at average cost) | 317 475 | 386 799 |
|--|---------|---------|

|                      |         |         |
|----------------------|---------|---------|
| Other current assets | 693 826 | 664 603 |
|----------------------|---------|---------|

|                      |            |            |
|----------------------|------------|------------|
| TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS | 37 240 417 | 28 918 122 |
|----------------------|------------|------------|

|                  |            |            |
|------------------|------------|------------|
| Deferred charges | 22 779 668 | 24 113 286 |
|------------------|------------|------------|

### TOTAL ASSETS

|                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| \$ 567 032 406 | \$ 521 558 036 |
|----------------|----------------|

# CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEETS

December 31, 2022 and 2021

| EQUITIES & LIABILITIES                               | 2022                  | 2021                  |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Equities:  |                       |                       |
| Patronage capital                                    | \$215 497 571         | \$ 202 415 069        |
| Other equities                                       | 156 290               | 156 290               |
| Accumulated other comprehensive income (loss)        | 1 320 693             | (427 333)             |
| <b>TOTAL EQUITIES</b>                                | <b>216 974 554</b>    | <b>202 144 026</b>    |
| Long-term postretirement benefits liability          | 6 695 686             | 8 127 707             |
| Long-term debt, less current maturities              | 284 459 294           | 261 062 353           |
| Current Liabilities:                                 |                       |                       |
| Accounts payable and accrued liabilities             | 33 832 344            | 24 322 322            |
| Current maturities of long-term debt                 | 18 103 079            | 16 525 551            |
| Current portion of postretirement benefits liability | 326 136               | 199 148               |
| Accrued interest payable                             | 1 056 611             | 687 361               |
| Consumers' deposits                                  | 2 817 398             | 2 474 374             |
| <b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>                     | <b>56 135 568</b>     | <b>44 208 756</b>     |
| Deferred Credits                                     | 2 767 304             | 6 015 194             |
| <b>TOTAL EQUITES &amp; LIABILITIES</b>               | <b>\$ 567 032 406</b> | <b>\$ 521 558 036</b> |



# CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEETS

For the Years Ended December 31, 2022 and 2021

## STATEMENT OF REVENUE & EXPENSE

2022

2021

### Operating Revenues:

Sale of electricity \$ 235 222 243 \$180 543 711

Other electric revenues 8 873 755 7 670 797

TOTAL OPERATING REVENUES 244 095 998 188 214 508

### Operating Expenses:

Cost of power 158 237 411 112 712 778

Transmission Expense 1 760 102 594 865

Distribution expense - Operation 6 108 921 6 166 523

Distribution Expense - Maintenance 16 718 790 16 137 121

Consumer accounts expense 7 256 943 5 795 871

Administrative and general expense 10 691 120 10 034 981

Depreciation expense 20 385 314 19 383 186

Taxes other than income taxes 3 021 403 2 724 218

OPERATING EXPENSES 224 180 004 173 549 543

OPERATING MARGINS BEFORE INTEREST EXPENSE 19 915 994 14 664 965

Interest on long-term debt and consumer deposits 10 422 608 9 410 241

OPERATING MARGIN (LOSS) 9 493 386 5 254 724

Generation and transmission capital credits 3 176 314 3 082 720

Patronage capital - Associated organizations 1 831 261 1 880 904

### Nonoperating Margins:

Interest income 152 115 160 844

Other nonoperating income (expense) 69 707 246 078

TOTAL NONOPERATING MARGINS 221 822 406 922

## NET MARGIN

\$ 14 722 783

\$ 10 625 270

# STATEMENTS OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

For the Years Ended December 31, 2022 and 2021

## STATEMENTS OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

2022

2021

|                             |               |               |
|-----------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Net margin                  | \$ 14 722 783 | \$ 10 625 270 |
| Other Comprehensive Income: |               |               |
| Actuarial gain (loss)       | 1 748 026     | 584 913       |
| COMPREHENSIVE INCOME        | \$ 16 470 809 | \$ 11 210 183 |

## STATEMENTS OF PATRONAGE CAPITAL & ACCUMULATED OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

|                                 | PATRONAGE<br>CAPITAL | OTHER<br>EQUITIES | ACCUMULATED<br>OTHER<br>COMPREHENSIVE<br>INCOME (LOSS) | TOTAL          |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|--|----------------|
| Balance, December 31, 2020      | \$ 191 789 799       | \$ 156 290        | \$ (1 012 246)   | \$ 190 933 843 |
| Net margin                      | 10 625 270           | -                 | -  | 10 625 270     |
| Other Comprehensive Income:     |                      |                   |  |                |
| Actuarial gain/(loss)           | -                    | -                 | 584 913  | 584 913        |
| Balance, December 31, 2021      | 202 415 069          | 156 290           | (427 333)  | 202 144 026    |
| Net margin                      | 14 722 783           | -                 | -  | 14 722 783     |
| Other Comprehensive Income:     |                      |                   |  |                |
| Actuarial gain/(loss)           | -                    | -                 | 1 748 026  | 1 748 026      |
| Patronage capital retired - Net | (1 640 281)          | -                 | -  | (1 640 281)    |
| Balance, December 31, 2022      | \$ 215 497 571       | \$ 156 290        | \$ 1 320 693   | \$ 216 974 554 |



# STATEMENTS OF CASH FLOWS

For the Years Ended December 31, 2022 and 2021

## STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

2022

2021

### Cash Flows from Operating Activities:

|  |               |               |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| Net margin   | \$ 14 722 783 | \$ 10 625 270 |
| Adjustments to Reconcile Net Margins to Net Cash Provided by Operating Activities: |               |               |
| Depreciation expense   | 20 385 314    | 19 383 186    |
| Noncash patronage allocation from associated organizations                         | (5 007 575)   | (4 963 624)   |
| Accumulated provision for pensions and benefits                                    | 442 993       | 419 748       |
| Cash Provided by (Used for) the Change in:   |               |               |
| Accounts receivable, net   | (8 149 756)   | (815 548)     |
| Materials and supplies   | 69 324        | 1 341 218     |
| Other current assets   | (29 223)      | (117 781)     |
| Deferred charges   | 1 333 618     | (7 987 406)   |
| Deferred credits   | (3 247 890)   | 2 444 886     |
| Accounts payable and accrued liabilities   | 9 510 022     | (384 229)     |
| Accrued interest payable   | 369 250       | 23 260        |
| Consumers' deposits  | 343 024       | (254 175)     |
| TOTAL ADJUSTMENTS  | 16 019 101    | 9 089 535     |
| NET CASH PROVIDED BY OPERATING ACTIVITIES  | 30 741 884    | 19 714 805    |

### Cash Flows From Investing Activities:

|  |              |              |
|--|--------------|--------------|
| Capital expenditures for utility plant, net of retirements | (55 145 113) | (47 348 720) |
| Net change in restricted cash                              | 26 410       | (42 224)     |
| Patronage retirements from associated organizations        | 1 281 681    | 1 278 237    |
| NET CASH USED IN INVESTING ACTIVITIES                      | (53 837 022) | (46 112 707) |

### Cash Flows From Financing Activities:

|   |              |              |
|---|--------------|--------------|
| Proceeds from long-term debt              | 40 429 694   | 31 500 000   |
| Payments of long-term debt                | (16 525 531) | (14 590 953) |
| Net change in lines of credit             | 1 070 306    | 10 429 694   |
| Retirement of capital credits             | (1 640 281)  | -            |
| NET CASH PROVIDED BY FINANCING ACTIVITIES | 23 334 188   | 27 338 741   |

|                                       |         |         |
|---------------------------------------|---------|---------|
| INCREASE IN CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS | 239 050 | 940 839 |
|---------------------------------------|---------|---------|

|  |           |              |
|--|-----------|--------------|
| Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year | 6 781 419 | 5 840 580    |
| CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS AT END OF YEAR       | 7 020 469 | \$ 6 781 419 |

### Supplemental Disclosures of Cash Flow Information:

|   |              |              |
|---|--------------|--------------|
| Cash paid during the year for interest expense, net of capitalized accounts | \$ 8 632 829 | \$ 7 966 452 |
|---|--------------|--------------|

### Noncash Investing and Financing Activities:

|  |              |            |
|--|--------------|------------|
| Net actuarial gain (loss) on postretirement benefit plan | \$ 1 748 026 | \$ 584 913 |
|--|--------------|------------|

# Sam Houston EC Awards \$81,000 to Local High School Seniors

**SAM HOUSTON ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE** awards scholarships each year to high school seniors whose parents or guardians are active consumer-members of the Cooperative.

The money that funds the scholarship program comes from unclaimed capital credits that are returned to the Cooperative by the state of Texas and earmarked for scholarships.

After careful consideration of applicants' academic achievements, activities, college plans, financial need and personal recommendations, Sam Houston EC awarded \$81,000 in scholarships to 30 students.

Scholarship winners may apply the funds toward tuition and fees at the Texas college or university of their choice.

Since its inception in 1992, the scholarship program has awarded more than \$1.5 million to nearly 800 local students. ■

## \$3,000 Scholarship Winners

|                                    |                     |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Kade Layton Brackin</b>         | West Hardin         |
| <b>Emberlee Grace Compton</b>      | Hardin-Jefferson    |
| <b>Colby James Ewing</b>           | Liberty             |
| <b>Ja'Noria Janay Harrell</b>      | Livingston          |
| <b>Ashley Sky Hernandez</b>        | Caney Creek         |
| <b>Riley Joseph Hickox</b>         | Big Sandy           |
| <b>Maci Grace Hill</b>             | Livingston          |
| <b>Corynn Jule Kaleh</b>           | Big Sandy           |
| <b>Loren Marie Massey</b>          | Coldspring-Oakhurst |
| <b>Sydney Marie Odom</b>           | Woodville           |
| <b>Anna McKinley Overstreet</b>    | Livingston          |
| <b>Eva Andrea Perez</b>            | Corrigan-Camden     |
| <b>Libertyann Justice Polonski</b> | Caney Creek         |
| <b>Jaxon Lee Potter</b>            | Livingston          |
| <b>Jayson Vernon Potter</b>        | Livingston          |
| <b>Jocelyn Ramirez</b>             | Caney Creek         |
| <b>Jacklyn Rylee Russell</b>       | Onalaska            |
| <b>Brianna Adriane Shaw-Rucker</b> | Coldspring-Oakhurst |
| <b>Levi William Smart</b>          | Silsbee             |
| <b>Kylie Lynn Stichler</b>         | Caney Creek         |
| <b>Irissa Vera</b>                 | Corrigan-Camden     |
| <b>Quinton Russell Walberg</b>     | Coldspring-Oakhurst |
| <b>James Loyd Whiteside</b>        | Kountze             |
| <b>Tangela Ara'e Yates</b>         | Shepherd            |

## \$1,500 Vocational Scholarship Winners

|                                   |            |
|-----------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Jimena Margarita Hernandez</b> | Livingston |
| <b>Alejandra Margarita Perez</b>  | Goodrich   |
| <b>Jackson Royce Rayburn</b>      | Chester    |
| <b>Thomas Cole Standley</b>       | Woodville  |
| <b>Taylor Ann Sublett</b>         | Shepherd   |
| <b>Jason Valdez Jr.</b>           | Big Sandy  |



# Restoring Power Safely and Efficiently

**FOR MOST** Sam Houston Electric Cooperative members, outages are rare and only last a few hours. But when major storms impact our area, extended outages can be unavoidable. Sam Houston EC is ready to restore power as safely and efficiently as possible.

When it's safe, our crews start by repairing power lines and equipment that will restore power to the greatest number of people in the shortest time possible.

This process begins with repairs to the larger main distribution lines that service a great number of homes and businesses. After that, crews work on tap lines, which deliver power to transformers. Finally, individual service lines that run between transformers and homes are repaired.

We can't control the weather, but we can prepare for it. Sam Houston EC keeps a supply of extra utility poles, transformers and other equipment on hand so we can quickly get to work in the event of an outage. When widespread outages occur, multiple crews will be out in the field working to repair damage at multiple locations. We also coordinate with nearby co-ops to bring in additional crews when necessary. ■





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



# Special Delivery

How a crudely scrawled message 300 years ago saved its sender's life

BY W.F. STRONG • ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN WILSON

**THE LUCKIEST LETTER** in Texas took six months to reach its destination. But the fact that it arrived at all was a miracle within a miracle, and it saved the sender's life. This was more than 300 years ago, when Texas was under Spanish rule. It was a Hail Mary mailing.

François Simars de Bellisle was just 24 when he left France to come to America in 1719. He was headed for Louisiana on a small ship, but his captain overshot their destination, ending up near present-day Galveston, about 300 miles off course.

Bellisle and four other French passengers took meager supplies—biscuits, guns, swords—and went ashore to determine their location and seek help. They slept well that first night, but when they

awoke the next morning, their ship was gone. They had been abandoned.

They walked east to what was likely the mouth of the Sabine River, where they could go no farther because of deep mud. Soon they began to succumb to starvation, and within two months, Bellisle had buried all his friends. He was alone and desperate.

Bellisle believed he was living his last days. He had made his way back to Galveston Bay, out of bullets and reduced to eating boiled grass and worms. Then one clear morning, he saw the first Native Americans he had seen since being stranded. They were Akokisas and his only hope for survival.

He made his way across the bay in a

crude boat he had found. The Akokisas took his goods and stripped him. He wrote that he was forced into labor, ordered about mercilessly and beaten regularly—but fed.

After a forced 150-mile walk to the Brazos River to hunt buffalo, he couldn't help but marvel at the landscape, later writing, "This is the most beautiful country in the world. The earth is black. Grass grows there to a prodigal height, and in abundance, which is a certain sign that the earth is good."

Bellisle soon realized his situation was still dire. So he retrieved one of the few pieces of paper he had, carved a crude pen out of wood, and made ink out of charcoal and water. He wrote a letter begging for rescue from anyone who might receive it and gave it to visitors from the Bidai tribe.

Then the miracle: Members of the Hasinai tribe, which had close ties to the French, took it to the commander of the garrison at Natchitoches, Louisiana. The commander, Louis Juchereau de Saint-Denis, wrote a letter in return and ordered the Hasinai to bring the cast-away back, dead or alive.

When Bellisle's rescuers reached the Akokisa camp, they gave Bellisle the letter that informed him the Hasinai would escort him to Natchitoches. His captors relented.

It still took him months to get to Natchitoches, but at least Bellisle was free. He had sent what was the land version of a message in a bottle. It caught the best currents and washed up on the perfect shore. His literacy—and luck—saved him. ■



# Texas Seafood

The catch of the day sparkles in these inventive dishes

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

Growing up near the Gulf, my mami loved getting shrimp from local shrimpers. One evening she surprised us with shrimp *albóndigas*, succulent meatballs swimming in a rich tomato broth. Served with warm corn tortillas, this dish is comfort at its best. I am excited to share my mami's recipe—a bit of her love from my home to yours. Enjoy!

## Albóndigas de Camarón (Shrimp Meatballs)

**½ pound Roma tomatoes**  
**½ pound tomatillos**  
**6 cups shrimp or vegetable broth, divided use**  
**1 pound shrimp, peeled and deveined**  
**1 egg**  
**2 teaspoons dried oregano**  
**1–2 tablespoons masa harina (corn flour)**  
**2 tablespoons olive oil**  
**½ onion, diced**  
**2 stalks celery, diced**  
**2 medium carrots, diced**  
**2 cloves garlic, minced**  
**2 teaspoons cumin**  
**3 teaspoons salt**  
**2 teaspoons ground black pepper**  
**½ cup rinsed and chopped cilantro**  
**Rice, steamed (optional)**  
**4 corn tortillas, for serving**  
**Sliced radishes, for garnish**  
**Cilantro, rinsed and chopped, for garnish**

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Place tomatoes and tomatillos on a baking sheet. Roast until skins have charred, turning occasionally, 10–13 minutes. Remove from oven and allow to cool.
2. Blend the cooled tomatoes and tomatillos in a blender or food processor with 1 cup broth until smooth. Set aside.
3. Pulse shrimp in cleaned food processor until finely ground.
4. Move ground shrimp to a bowl. Add egg, oregano and masa harina. Mix by hand until well combined.
5. Lightly oil clean hands and form shrimp mixture into ¾-inch meatballs. Place meatballs on baking sheet and refrigerate to keep firm.
6. In a stock pot or Dutch oven, add olive oil over medium-high heat. Add onion, celery and carrots and sauté until tender, about 4 minutes. Stir in garlic and cumin and cook 30 seconds. Stir in tomato mixture and cook an additional 2 minutes.
7. Add remaining broth and bring soup to a boil. Reduce heat to low and season with salt and pepper. Gently add meatballs to broth. Simmer without stirring 8–10 minutes. Stir in cilantro.
8. Serve over steamed rice or alone as a soup. Garnish with radishes and cilantro and serve with warm tortillas.

**SERVES 4**

**TCP** Follow along with Vianney Rodriguez while she cooks in Cocina Gris at [sweetlifebake.com](http://sweetlifebake.com), where she features a recipe for Skillet Pico de Gallo Shrimp.





## Hatch'en Cocktails

ANN CYCHOSZ  
TRI-COUNTY EC

Cychosz stashes away a few hatch peppers when they're in season to whip up these shrimp cocktails, a neighborhood favorite. Feel free to use canned roasted hatch peppers. Served in cocktail glasses, this appetizer will be a hit at any gathering.

### SHRIMP

- 1 tablespoon salt**
- 2 pounds Gulf shrimp, peeled and deveined**

### COCKTAIL SAUCE

- 3 cups ketchup**
- 2 tablespoons horseradish**
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce**
- 1 teaspoon hot chili sauce**
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper**
- Juice of 2 limes**
- 3 avocados, pitted and cut into ¼-inch cubes**
- ½ cup diced red onion**
- ¼ cup chopped cilantro**
- 1 cup chopped roasted hatch peppers**
- Tortilla chips, for serving**

- 1. SHRIMP** Bring a pot of water to a boil and add salt. Add shrimp and cook 2–3 minutes, or until shrimp are cooked through.
- 2.** Remove shrimp with a slotted spoon, place on a baking sheet and allow to cool.
- 3.** Cut shrimp into ¼-inch pieces.
- 4. COCKTAIL SAUCE** In a large bowl, stir together ketchup, horseradish, Worcestershire sauce, hot chili sauce, pepper and lime juice.

\$500 WINNER

## Escabeche

KARA HILL  
WOOD COUNTY EC



Hill's husband has fond memories of his Filipino mom cooking fresh fish that he, his brother and dad caught. This escabeche has the perfect level of acidity to pair wonderfully with black drum, a white fish with a mild, sweet flavor.

**SERVES 6**



### FISH

- 6 black drum fillets (about 2 pounds total), skin removed**
- Salt and ground black pepper**
- ¼ cup flour**
- 2 tablespoons olive oil**

### ESCABECHE

- ½ cup white vinegar**
- 1 cup water**
- ⅓ cup brown sugar**
- 2 teaspoons soy sauce**
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch**
- ¼ cup cold water**
- 2 tablespoons olive oil**
- 4 cloves garlic, minced**
- 2 tablespoons minced ginger, fresh or jarred**
- 1 medium onion, sliced**
- 1 small red bell pepper, sliced**
- 1 small green bell pepper, sliced**
- 1 small yellow bell pepper, sliced**
- 2 medium carrots, julienned**
- 3 cups cooked rice**

- 1. FISH** Preheat oven to 250 degrees. Gently pat down fish with paper towels. Season fish with salt and pepper. Place flour in shallow dish.
- 2.** Lightly dredge fish in flour, coating each side, and shake off excess. Place on baking sheet and repeat until all fillets are coated.
- 3.** In a large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Pan-fry fish until golden-brown on each side, 2–3 minutes. Place on baking sheet, then repeat until all fillets are fried.
- 4.** Place fish in oven.
- 5. ESCABECHE** In a bowl, stir together vinegar, water, brown sugar and soy sauce.
- 6.** Dissolve cornstarch in cold water.
- 7.** In a large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Sauté garlic and ginger until fragrant, stirring often, about 3 minutes. Do not let the garlic and ginger brown.
- 8.** Add onion, bell peppers and carrots and sauté for 2 minutes. Pour vinegar mixture into skillet. Cover and bring to a boil.
- 9.** Remove cover, add cornstarch mixture, and return to a boil, stirring until sauce has thickened. Serve fish over rice, then top with escabeche.

## TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

**HOLIDAY DESSERTS** DUE JUNE 10  
We'll help cap off your holiday feasts with reader recipes in the November issue. Submit yours online by June 10 for a chance to win \$500.



CONTINUED >

5. Add shrimp, avocado, red onion, cilantro and hatch peppers. Stir gently to combine. Chill until ready to serve. Serve with tortilla chips.

SERVES 12

## Jamaica Beach Snapper

GEORGE GRALL  
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

Dinner ready in under 15 minutes? Yes, please. Baked snapper served warm with a chili butter sauce is the ultimate week-night dinner. Roast or steam vegetables while the fish bakes and have dinner ready in a snap.

**4 red snapper fillets (6 ounces each)**  
**½ cup (1 stick) butter, melted**  
**2 tablespoons garlic powder**  
**1 tablespoon chili powder**  
**1 large lemon, cut into wedges**  
**Parsley (optional)**

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees.



2. Generously coat a 9-by-11-inch pan with cooking spray and place snapper fillets in the pan.

3. Bake 15 minutes or until the fish flakes easily with a fork.

4. Combine melted butter, garlic powder and chili powder in a bowl and stir until well blended.

5. Drizzle butter mixture over fish and serve with lemon wedges and garnished with parsley, if desired.

SERVES 4

## Shipsape Shrimp

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ

Texas Gulf shrimp is a great ingredient for meals that can come together in under 30 minutes. Not sure how to buy and store fresh shrimp? Follow these tips, then check out two amazing shrimp recipes in this month's issue:

**Look for firm, translucent shrimp.**

**Avoid shrimp with slimy shells and any that smell like ammonia.**

**Place fresh shrimp in a bowl on ice to maintain freshness in the fridge.**

**Uncooked shrimp stay fresh in the fridge for up to three days.**

**Freeze shrimp for up to two months.**

**Thaw frozen shrimp overnight in the fridge.**

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

## Kilgore's Kickers

The Rangerette museum preserves the legacy of the iconic drill team

BY CHET GARNER

**FOOTBALL IS AN EXPERIENCE** in Texas. It's about much more than just what happens when the players snap the ball. I mean, what would the Dallas Cowboys be without their cheerleaders? They certainly couldn't be America's team without America's sweethearts, right? And if you've ever danced in a drill team or enjoyed the precise high kicks and jump splits of these athletes, then you have the women of Kilgore College to thank.

I traveled to East Texas to pay my respects and visit the official museum of the Kilgore Rangerettes—America's first precision dance drill team.

After filling my belly with pork ribs at Country Tavern Bar-B-Que, I cruised Kilgore, between Tyler and Longview, and passed the towering oil derricks of the "World's Richest Acre," which once held 24 wells on one city block. In the 1930s, Kilgore was the definition of a boomtown.

While football games at Kilgore College were popular, the college's president became irritated with fans leaving at half time and drinking under the stands. So in 1940 he tasked teacher Gussie Nell Davis with figuring out a way to keep fans in the stands. Her solution was to bring a group of talented dancers onto the field. It launched a multibillion-dollar industry.

I stepped into the Rangerette Showcase and Museum and was immediately impressed with mannequins showcasing the evolution of the uniforms. While the skirts may have been scandalous at the time—they dared to show knees—the uniform is now iconic. I appreciated the short film giving context to the stories and was blown away by the number of photos depicting Rangerettes with celebrities and presidents throughout the decades.

I'll never think of drill team dancing the same way again. Now to work on my high kick! ■

ABOVE Chet's style might not be *precisely* what the Kilgore Rangerettes look for in a dancer.

**TCP** The Rangerettes' perfected routines are exactly what drew Chet to Kilgore. See the video on our website and see all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



## Know Before You Go

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

## JUNE

08

**Coleman [8–10] Rodeo**,  
colemanrodeo.com

09

**Johnson City Dive-In Movies**, (830) 868-7111,  
johnsoncitytx.org

**Blanco [9–11] Lavender Festival**, (830) 833-5101,  
blancolavenderfest.com

**Ingram [9–10, 16–17, 23–24] Newsies**, (830) 367-5121,  
hcaf.com

**Kerrville [9–10, 16–18, 23–25] Beer for Breakfast**, (830) 896-9393,  
caillouxperformingarts.com

10

**Brenham Tapestry: The Carole King Songbook With Suzanne O Davis**, (979) 337-7240,  
thebarnhillcenter.com

**Fredericksburg Craft Beer Festival**,  
fbgcrafterbeerfestival.com

**Nacogdoches Texas Blueberry Festival**, (936) 560-5533,  
tbf.nacogdoches.org

**Terrell [10–11] Antique Tractor and Engine Show and Pull**, (214) 497-1611,  
north-texas-antique-tractor-and-engine-club.net

11

**Lufkin Madagascar the Musical**, (936) 633-5454,  
angelinaarts.org

15

**Stonewall [15–17] Peach Jamboree and Rodeo**, (830) 644-2735,  
stonewalltexas.com



**Galveston [15-19]**  
**Juneteenth Celebrations,**  
 (409) 457-3570,  
[visitgalveston.com](http://visitgalveston.com)

17

**Linden Underground**  
**Railroad Quilt Auction**  
**and Performance,**  
 (903) 826-2495,  
[lindenpubliclibrary.org](http://lindenpubliclibrary.org)

22

**Fredericksburg Women's**  
**Ranch Seminar,**  
 (830) 456-8956,  
[hillcountrycattlewomen.org](http://hillcountrycattlewomen.org)

23

**McKinney [23-24] Flip**  
**Orley: Comic and Hypno-**  
**tist,** (214) 769-0645,  
[thecomedyarena.com](http://thecomedyarena.com)

30

**Hemphill [30-July 2] Patri-**  
**otic Weekend on Toledo**  
**Bend,** (409) 787-2732,  
[sabinecountychamber.com](http://sabinecountychamber.com)

**Ingram [30-July 28] Summer**  
**ArtMart,** (830) 367-5121,  
[hcaf.com](http://hcaf.com)

JULY

01

**Johnson City Fourth Fest**  
**Parade and Fireworks,**  
 (830) 868-7111,  
[johnsoncitytx.org](http://johnsoncitytx.org)

**The Colony Liberty by**  
**the Lake,** (972) 624-5253,  
[visitthecolonytx.com](http://visitthecolonytx.com)

03

**Giddings [3-4] Freedom**  
**Fest and Fury on the 4th,**  
 (979) 542-3455,  
[giddingsstx.com](http://giddingsstx.com)

04

**Kerrville 4th on the**  
**River,** (830) 315-5483,  
[kerrvilletx.gov](http://kerrvilletx.gov)

**TCP Submit Your Event**

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



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The blade is full tang, meaning it doesn't stop at the handle but extends to the length of the grip for the ultimate in strength. The blade is made from 420 surgical steel, famed for its sharpness and its resistance to corrosion.

The handle is made from genuine natural bone, and features decorative wood spacers and a hand-carved motif of two overlapping feathers—a reminder for you to respect and connect with the natural world.

This fusion of substance and style can garner a high price tag out in the marketplace. In fact, we found full tang, stainless steel blades with bone handles in excess of \$2,000. Well, that won't cut it around here. We have mastered the hunt for the best deal, and in turn pass the spoils on to our customers.

**But we don't stop there.** While supplies last, we'll include a pair of \$99 8x21 power compact binoculars *and* a genuine leather sheath **FREE** when you purchase the **Huntsman Blade**.

**Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed.** Feel the knife in your hands, wear it on your hip, inspect the impeccable craftsmanship. If you don't feel like we cut you a fair deal, send it back within 30 days for a complete refund of the item price.

**Limited Reserves.** A deal like this won't last long. We have only 1120 **Huntsman Blades** for this ad only. Don't let this beauty slip through your fingers. Call today!

**Huntsman Blade \$249\***

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*"The feel of this knife  
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— H., Arvada, CO



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# Dad

Sharing their passions and leading their families, dads play an important role in the everyday life of Texans. These reader entries warm our hearts and make us smile. Gather around the family album as we celebrate dear old dad.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ

**1** HEATHER MEIFERT  
COSERV

"This is daddy's little girl, Madison."

**2** KARI ZIMMERMAN  
HAMILTON COUNTY EC

"My grandson shelling peas with his gramps. Such a sweet moment."

**3** MONA PARISH  
SAM HOUSTON EC

First piano lesson with Pops, the man behind the dad.

**4** GALE STEVENS  
BOWIE-CASS EC

"My son Jared Stevens of Campbell and his son Tyler ride almost every day and rodeo on weekends."



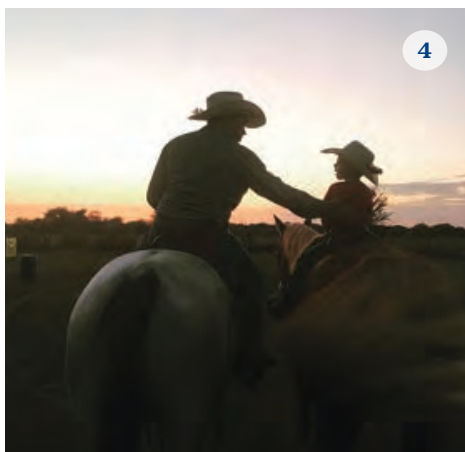
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**DUE JUL 10** Golden Hour  
**DUE AUG 10** Mailboxes



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

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





Texas Water Safari participant Courtney Shaver collapses in her boat after a difficult portage.

## Ending on a Sour Note

Here's a first: Accomplished competitor falls short of the finish line

BY PAM LEBLANC  
PHOTO BY ERICH SCHLEGEL

**I BAILED OUT OF THE BOAT** in Cheap-side—which sounds like a line in a country-western song.

But this was no two-step. I staggered out of a racing canoe under a highway on the Guadalupe River, 154 miles into a 264-mile paddling race called the Texas Water Safari. It was the very first DNF of my life. I laid down my paddle, sobbed a bit and barfed.

My team went on without me.

Quitting's a weird thing. When I tell this story to friends, a lot of them nod and say, "You might have hurt yourself if you'd continued."

But that's not it, exactly. I quit because a tiny voice inside my head suggested I do it, and I listened. I didn't want to slog 100 more miles in 106-degree heat. And so, after 32 hours of nonstop paddling,

I bid my tough-as-nails teammates adieu.

Looking back, I foretold my meltdown. I was afraid of the heat and the low river flow.

In 2019, I finished the race, which starts at Spring Lake in San Marcos and ends at Seadrift on the Texas coast, in about 53 hours as part of a three-woman team. I vowed then never to do it again. But when veteran paddler Deb Richardson invited me to join her five-person crew, I forgot about the alligators, mud, log jams, spiders and hallucinations and signed up.

I began spending every weekend on the river. On race day last June, we lined up our 40-foot boat at the back of the pack. When the starting horn sounded, we sliced through the crowd like we were parting the Red Sea. Then, just a few hundred yards in, our rudder cable snapped, and we fell into last place.

Over the next six hours, we picked off boat after boat, clawing our way from 138th position to 100th, then 50th. We nailed every portage and cut through every rapid. That first night, the frogs were so loud you couldn't hear anything else. I was giddy.

But it was hot, and the water was so low, we had to drag through dozens of gravel bars. My muscles got weak, my butt sore. Racers don't stop to sleep or admire the scenery, and I got weepy.

After I quit and went home, I slept 12 hours. I woke up to news that my team had climbed into 18th place. I sped back to cheer them on.

In the end, half the 138 boats that started quit. My team finished in just under 77 hours, in one of the toughest years in the race's 59-year history.

I couldn't be prouder.

And this time I'm not kidding. I'm never doing it again. ■





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