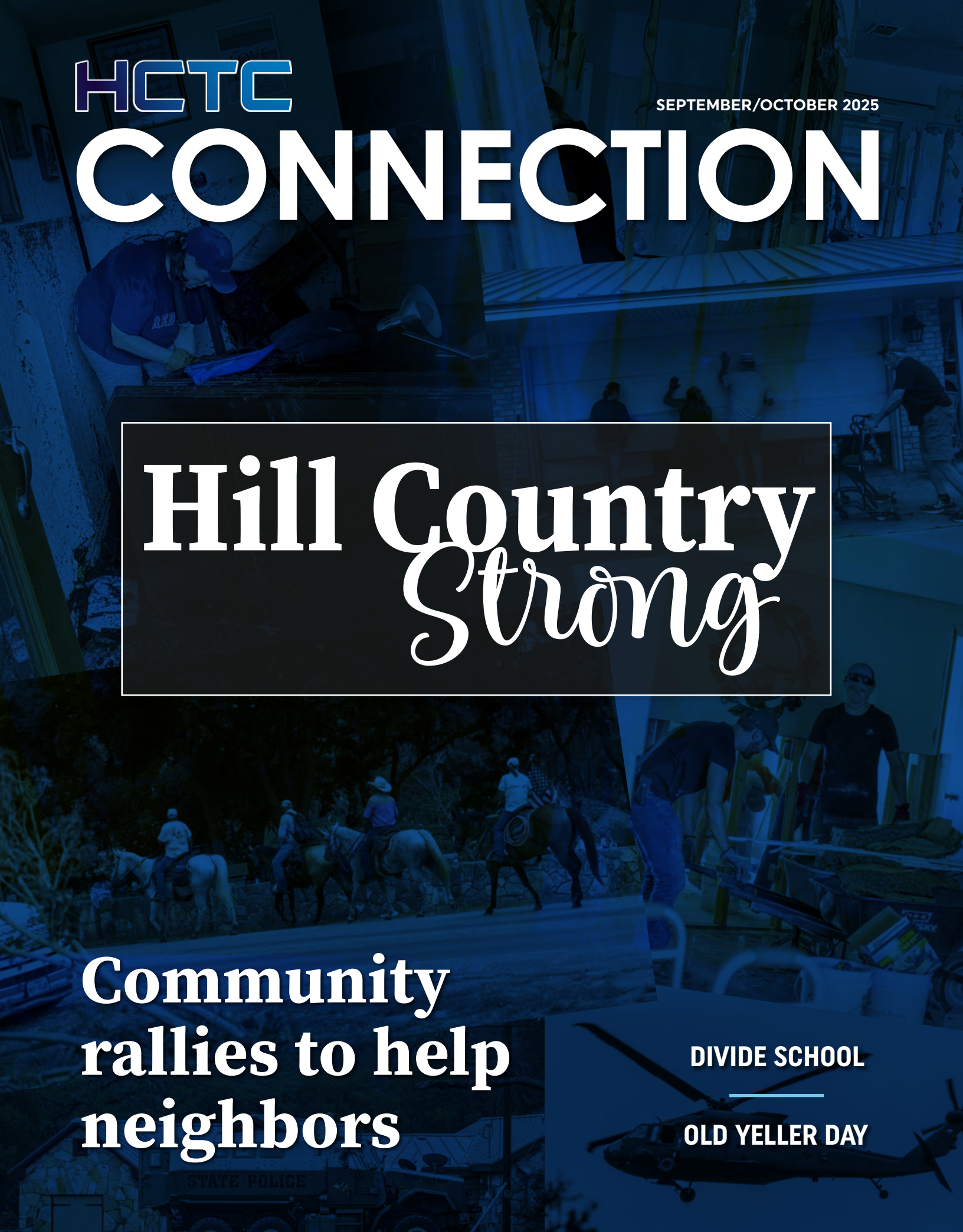




HCTC

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2025

CONNECTION

Hill Country *Strong*

Community
rallies to help
neighbors

DIVIDE SCHOOL

OLD YELLER DAY



By Shirley Bloomfield, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Ensuring Access for All

Supreme Court upholds
Universal Service Fund

Money raised by a small fee on your communications bill makes a critical difference throughout rural America. Earlier this year, a ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court allowed the Universal Service Fund, or USF, to continue.

I can't emphasize enough how critical this ruling is in a journey that began in 1934, when the Communications Act decreed all Americans should have access to rapid, efficient and nationwide communication services at reasonable prices.

Then, the 1996 Telecommunications Act created the USF to better connect rural areas and make voice and broadband services more affordable for rural and low-income consumers, schools, libraries and rural health care facilities.

By affirming that the Federal Communications Commission has discretion to collect the fees, the court kept this foundational tool in place. A March survey of nearly 270 NTCA members indicated that the USF programs help keep rural broadband rates more affordable. Without this funding, rural consumer rates could be more than double those in urban areas.

Policymakers in Washington, D.C., are debating how to reform universal service programs going forward, so that they can continue to serve the needs of millions of Americans.

It is essential that our elected officials understand the positive impacts the critical USF programs have had—and continue to have—on the availability, affordability and sustainability of voice and broadband services for millions of consumers, businesses and anchor institutions in rural America.

Visit ntca.org/universalservice. 



Secure Your Digital World

Keys for success

While October is National Cybersecurity Awareness Month, protecting yourself requires year-long vigilance. And everyone's needs vary based on the online tools and resources you use.

Remember, bad actors are increasingly sophisticated—they want access to your information. The FBI offers a few tips for some of the key points of emphasis, and they provide a good starting point for planning your personalized security strategy.

Create a sturdy defense. Update systems and software. Also, install a strong, reputable antivirus program.

Connect carefully. Be cautious when connecting to a public Wi-Fi network. Avoid sensitive transactions, including purchases. Create a strong and unique passphrase for each online account.

Lock down all accounts. Establish multifactor authentication. Examine the email address in all correspondence and scrutinize website URLs before responding to a message or visiting a site. Don't click on anything in unsolicited emails or text messages.

Guard your information. Be cautious about your information in online profiles and social media accounts. Sharing the names of pets, schools and family members gives scammers hints they need to guess your passwords or the answers to your account security questions. Never send payments to unknown people or organizations, particularly those urging immediate action. 

RAISING HISTORY

Heritage breed farmers preserve the past while protecting the future

Story by LES O'DELL

Farmers, ranchers, shepherds and homesteaders work to raise crops and livestock as efficiently as possible. Like any business, the goal is to maximize income and profitability.

Yet many agriculturalists also see themselves as conservationists, working to preserve the past while ensuring the future by using Earth-friendly farming methods and raising animals facing extinction.

In Pikeville, Tennessee, Amy Balog and her family raise endangered agricultural animals, also called heritage livestock breeds. “There are so many reasons why,” she says. “It’s not only keeping the genetics going. It’s the history and provenance of the breeds.”

Her Faverolles chickens, Sebastopol geese and Saxony ducks are among 180 breeds listed on the Conservation Priority List, an annual ranking of farm animals on the brink of disappearing. The list includes varieties of 11 different animals, from rabbits to cattle, horses and hogs. Many breeds fall out of favor in commercial agricultural settings. Perhaps they don’t put on weight as quickly as other breeds, for example. But they still have value.

SUSTAINABILITY

Protecting biodiversity and genetic resources is an important reason for protecting heritage breeds, says Allison Kincaid, executive director of The Livestock Conservancy. But many producers choose heritage animals because they want to make a difference.

“None of us can predict what the future of agriculture will look like. This is about keeping these breeds around as a genetic

reservoir,” she says, adding these animals are key to food security. “If we didn’t have this diversity, eventually we would narrow our food system down to where it wasn’t sustainable. There would be no backup.”

Likewise, farmer Grant Breitreutz of Redwood Falls, Minnesota, takes a conservation approach to crop production. “We’ve been no-till for 12 years for all of our crops,” he says. Grant leaves farm implements that expose the soil, such as plows and discs, in the machine shed. Instead, he plants cover crops, grasses and other plants he sows without exposing the soil in order to replenish organic nutrients and to minimize erosion.

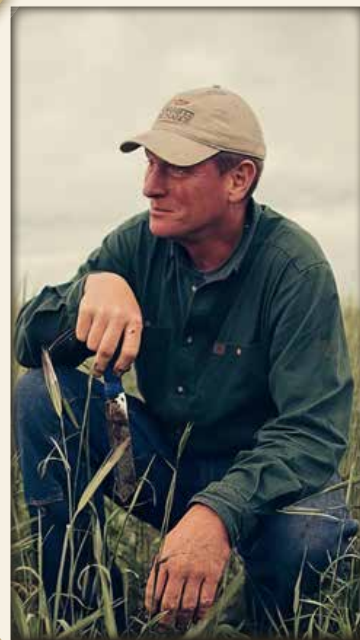
Grant pivoted to conservation farming practices to ensure his soil is healthy and hearty enough to produce bumper crops for generations to come. “If we’ve done this for 130 years of farming, how much time do we have left? So, that’s why we focus so hard on building our soils back,” he says. “It has made a world of difference, and the crops are much more drought resistant and are yielding more bushels per acre. Plus, our pastures have tripled in production over the years by taking care of the soil first.”

The Breitreutz family won the inaugural Minnesota Leopold Conservation Award, presented in 2024 by the Minnesota Soil Health Coalition. Grant says honors are not important, but preserving things for future generations is. Amy agrees.

“It’s more about quality over quantity and quality is what keeps these lines going. If we don’t do it, I’m afraid they’ll all get lost,” she says.



Amy and Daniel Balog, who live outside Pikeville, Tennessee, raise heritage animals like the Sebastopol goose she’s holding.



Grant Breitreutz uses no-till techniques that protect soil quality on his Minnesota farm.

For more about agronomic conservation, visit sandcountymn.org and to learn about livestock conservation efforts, visit livestockconservancy.org.

Photo courtesy of Amy and Daniel Balog

Photo courtesy of Grant Breitreutz

The Power of a Connected Community

Specific moments define communities. The flash flood that hit our region in July led to unimaginable damage and tragic loss of life. Many families will never be the same, and we continue to share our deepest condolences to them as a cooperative family.



CRAIG COOK
Chief Executive Officer

Careful planning is always an emphasis at HCTC, whether it's investing in our communications network to make sure it stays fast and reliable into the future while being prepared to quickly pivot to meet the challenges of unexpected emergencies that will inevitably arise. To this point, we annually prepare emergency response plans because we always want to make sure we're ready for any need.

But some events exceed any company's ability to anticipate. Those are the moments when we rely on our neighbors more than ever. In the wake of unspeakable tragedy, the Texas Hill Country has once again proven what those of us who call this place home have always known: When we face hardship, the

resilience, kindness and unwavering spirit of our community shines.

In the days, weeks and months since the flood, we have seen more examples of neighbors helping neighbors than I can possibly count. HCTC's own crews committed to restoring service to meet the needs of local businesses and residents. But the generosity of our community and surrounding areas extended so much further.

Groups like the United Cajun Navy brought specialized vehicles to help search for and rescue flood victims in hard-to-reach places. Contractor crews supplemented HCTC's efforts to restore service as quickly as possible. HCTC received countless offers of assistance from community-based broadband providers from around the state and nation. Local individuals, companies and organizations donated meals, snacks, drinks, safety kits and even cans of bug spray.

Throughout it all, we appreciate the patience and understanding you have shown to our team. The work to rebuild our community will continue for months, if not years. Some of that damage can never fully be repaired. But rest assured, HCTC will be right there alongside your other neighbors, helping however we can.

That is our mission as your hometown cooperative, but it goes beyond simply a job. This community is our home and the reason we exist. The road ahead of us may be long, but we have already shown that we can face any hardship together. We are proud to work side by side with our neighbors and proud to keep our community connected. Stay strong, be safe and may God bless the Texas Hill Country. [📞](#)

HCTC CONNECTION

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HCTC

HCTC is more than a provider of state-of-the-art telecommunications products and services. We are a member-owned cooperative with an elected board of directors who govern our organization using our bylaws, member input and business and industry conditions to guide their decisions. We are proud residents of the communities we serve, and we're dedicated to not only providing the best services possible, but doing so in a way that is ethical, safe and productive for our friends and neighbors. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Mission Statement: To be the premier provider of modern telecommunications and broadband services throughout our region.

Send address corrections to:

HCTC
P.O. Box 768 • 220 Carolyn
Ingram, TX 78025
Telephone: 830-367-5333

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UTILITY RESOURCES

On the Cover:



Local community members are joined by volunteers from around the country to start recovery efforts following the historic flooding in July. See Page 5 for more.

Photos courtesy of
Gabe Herrera and Kylie Nidever

Step by Step, We Will Rebuild

Our hearts and prayers are with everyone affected by the July flood. We've seen your resilience, kindness and unwavering spirit. To every first responder, volunteer, utility worker and neighbor, you are the reason this community keeps going.

HCTC stands with you.



Photos courtesy of
Gabe Rene and
Kylie Nidever



HIT THE Highway

Mapping out your perfect road trip

Story by DREW WOOLLEY

Fall is the perfect time for travel and new experiences with family and friends. And while flying can have its conveniences, most travelers prefer to hit the road when mapping out their next adventure. According to AAA's domestic travel forecast for a recent holiday weekend, 87% of travelers planned to make trips by car.

PREPARE FOR THE ROAD AHEAD

"I usually tend to drive, and most people choose to drive. And the reason for that is, for most families and groups of people, it's the most affordable way to travel," says AAA Texas Communications Manager Doug Shupe. "It's also the most convenient. You can leave when you want to leave and return when you want to. But there definitely needs to be some preparation before taking a long road trip."

Before everyone piles into the car, make sure you're ready for the journey. That includes giving your vehicle a quick inspection, planning a route and having the supplies—and the tunes—to keep everyone happy until you reach your destination.

SAFETY CHECK

Before any lengthy road trip, Doug recommends taking your vehicle for a tuneup at a trusted repair facility. But if you can't find time for that, it's still a good idea to do a few quick checks on your own.





Check your tires to make sure they're properly inflated and in good condition.

That includes the tread. If you can put an upside-down quarter in the grooves of your tires and see the top of George Washington's head, it's probably a good idea to replace them before taking a long trip.

If your vehicle's battery is more than 3 years old, consider having it tested before getting on the road. Vibration can also cause a battery to fail sooner, so check that the terminals are secure and free of corrosion.

Examine your radiator and cooling system to make sure they're in good condition. Check belts and hoses for cracks or fraying that could lead to problems after extended use.

Ensure your wiper blades are in good shape in case you pass through a rainy patch, and have someone help you check that your headlights, taillights and turn signals are all working properly.

PLANNING YOUR ROUTE

One of the best parts of any road trip is mapping out a path, as long as there's a little room for improvisation. Plan ahead and make the most of these tools



that can help you find the right stops along the way.

Know what's coming—Apps like Roadtrippers and GasBuddy can help you pick the best place to make a pit stop. Get suggestions for must-visit restaurants and scenic drives or just scope out the most affordable gas prices so you can make the most of your detours.

Go analog—GPS is an invaluable resource on the road, but it's still smart to have a physical map to orient yourself just in case you lose signal or your battery dies. Maps can even be a fun distraction for kids and give them a hands-on way to follow along with where you are.

Track your itinerary—If you've already set up all your reservations for hotels, restaurants and attractions, TripIt can keep track of it all in one place. The app syncs with your inbox to compile an itinerary, so you don't have to search for each confirmation email, and sends you reminders so you can focus on having fun.

Don't be afraid to rest—If you're driving for multiple days, be realistic about how far you can go before resting for the night. It's better to lean toward too many stops than too few. You can even pull over for a quick 30-minute nap if you're feeling drowsy.

FUN AND GAMES

Hitting the open road also means getting to spend plenty of time with your favorite people. So don't forget



to prepare the food, games and music that will help you make the most of it.

State of play—Road trip games are classic, from the Alphabet Game and I Spy to Two Truths and a Lie and 20 Questions. Make your own fun by taking turns thinking of a movie and describing it in the worst way possible to see who can guess it. Or, learn more about each other by picking a category like songs, books or foods and building your own top-five lists.

Fight the munchies—Stops at hole-in-the-wall restaurants are a must for



any road trip. But someone is bound to get hangry in between meals. Everyone's favorite snacks will vary, but it's hard to go wrong with some trail mix or jerky. You can even pack fruit and rice cakes for healthy options.

The perfect mix—Planning out a playlist that will make everyone happy is a tall task. You want music that will fit the mood and maybe even complement the terrain you're driving through. Fortunately, you don't have to do it alone these days. If everyone shares the same music service, you can make a shared playlist that everyone can contribute to. You can even make a game out of it, guessing who's the secret Swiftie or where all those oldies came from. 📻

BLAZING *the* TRAIL for Learning

The Divide School stands apart

Story by BRANDI DIXON

Today, the Divide Independent School District is a well-known community staple for ranching families in Mountain Home. The school's history dates back to 1882, when two families hired a local teacher to educate their children in her home.

"It was founded to meet the needs of the growing population of ranching families in the area," Principal Callie Hough says.

In 1893, as families in the area grew, William and Lou Wharton provided land for a one-room schoolhouse. With a building in place, families sent their children to school, which ran throughout the year, as long as they could afford to pay a teacher. Time marched on, and by 1936, the Divide Independent School District served a vast portion of Kerr County.

"In 1988, the district became independent," Callie says. "From its beginnings in the 1880s, the Divide School has included vast acreage of ranch land but has had no towns or cities within its boundaries."

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

The Divide School stands apart from other schools in many ways. Serving 37 students in pre-K through sixth grade, many of the classes are combined.

Teachers and staff also fill more than one role for the school. For example, Callie is not only the principal, she's also the first through third grade classroom teacher.

"We all have taken turns driving a bus, landscaping and doing routine maintenance," she says. "It's this steadfast commitment that empowers every student to reach their full potential, and the small family atmosphere and relationships within the school and the community make us special."

The seven faculty members all pair one main teaching role with a secondary administrative or general classroom need. For example, the physical education teacher also works as a rotating classroom aide and administrative assistant. This setup shows just how great the community buy-in is for the Divide ISD.

Sheila Hux is in her fifth year teaching the fourth through sixth grade classroom at the Divide School and says the combined grades and ages offer students incredible benefits.

"All students need to be great writers and readers, so I teach certain skills to the whole group," she says, adding students split into grade-level groups for more targeted content. "This technique pushes our students to perform at a higher level and adapt to changes."

CREATIVE CURRICULUM

The Divide School also offers students hands-on STEM projects throughout the year to build their skills in science, technology, engineering and math. The most recent school year saw students leading the way in projects about aquaponics, electric circuits, coding robots, budgeting for a vacation and more.

That aquaponics project is one of Sheila's favorites. "Our students built an aquaponics system with tubing, a pump,



Divide School students and faculty take a break during a hike at Garner State Park.



Acie Bannowsky, from left, Taelyn Benke and Trevor Hurt take a close look at a grasshopper in Giovanna Garcia's pre-K class.

goldfish and an aquarium," she says. "Students put the tubing and pump together, planted lettuce, learned that the goldfish created fertilizer and were able to observe how plants can grow without soil."

Plans include doubling the number of fish and plants, as well as adding a variety of plants to see how the system advances.

Recognizing the critical importance of literacy, the Divide School also offers a class for phonics with a targeted approach for students with dyslexia.

"We are using the Benchmark Phonics program with built-in repetition and review of skills taught over a set period," phonics teacher Susan Storey says. "Small-group instruction is included for these students who need more explicit instruction and practice."

Lessons are research-based and build vocabulary and knowledge during the four-to-six-week rotation.

Altogether, giving students the best education with the best resources possible is what the Divide School is all about. Its mission statement makes the district's priorities clear: "We believe education is best

accomplished in a safe environment where high standards of character and ethics are modeled by and expected of parents, students and staff. DISD strives to empower all students to grow as lifelong learners and responsible citizens." 

WHAT the TECH?

Technology plays a key role in the workings of the Divide Independent School District. Students become proficient in Google Slides and Google Docs by using them to complete many of their projects and presentations. Teachers also implement the use of smartboards and document cameras, along with many online programs for instruction and benchmarks.

Divide School students also take part in the Hour of Code, a national coding event that puts students' knowledge and skills to the test. One group of students this past school year also built a robot and used coding to give the robot commands.

"My students also are developing their coding skills," teacher Sheila Hux says. "We use an online resource called Hour of Code that teaches beginning-level coding through interactive websites."



Sheila Hux's fourth, fifth and sixth graders conduct a science experiment.

Photos courtesy of Divide ISD

HOW THE WEST WAS HEARD

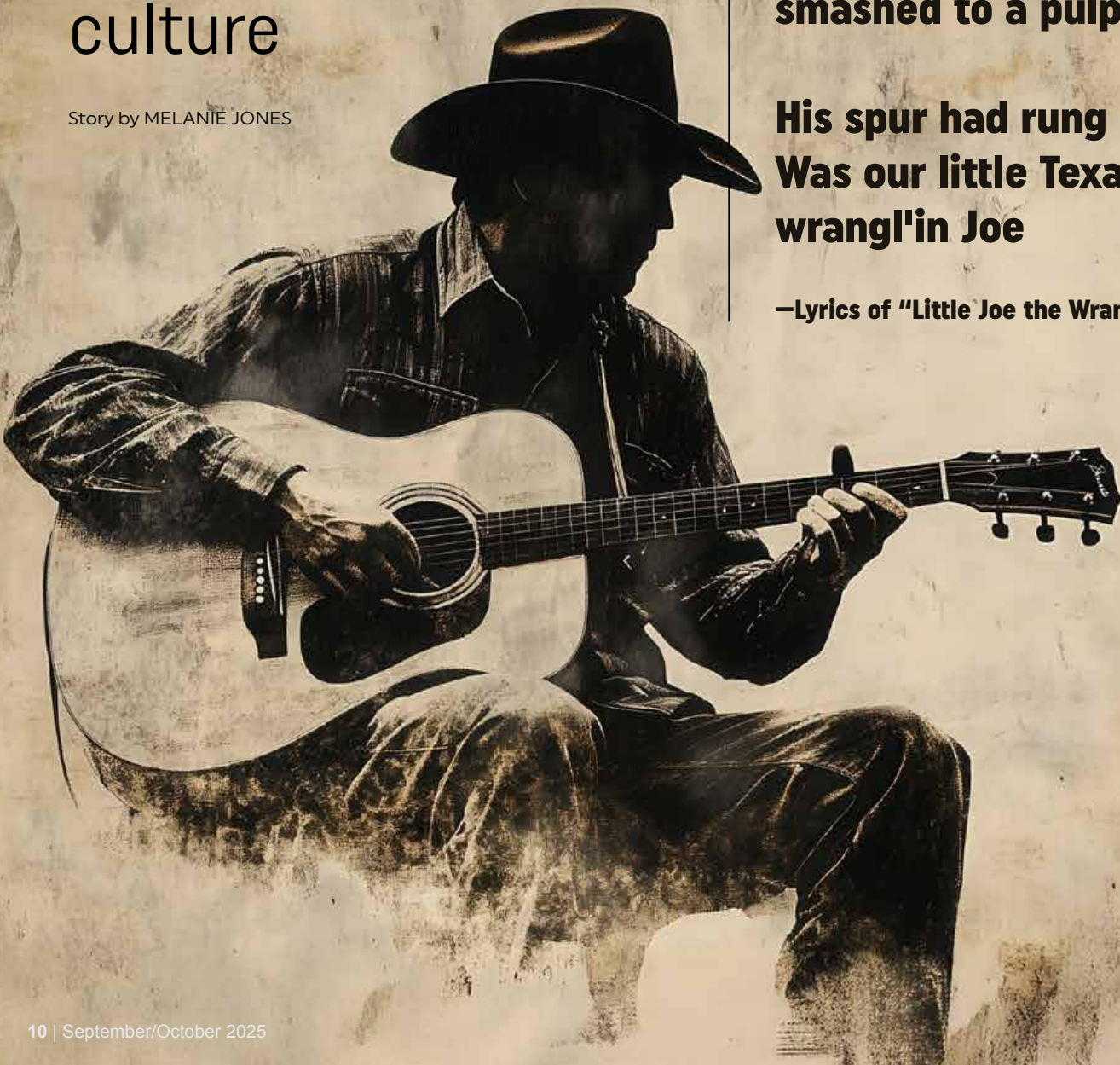
Poet and musician captures cowboy culture

Story by MELANIE JONES

**Next morn'in just
at daybreak
And beneath his horse,
smashed to a pulp**

**His spur had rung his knell
Was our little Texas Faithful,
wrangl'in Joe**

—Lyrics of “Little Joe the Wrangler”





Andy Hedges plays several instruments favored by cowboys, including the banjo.

Andy Hedges, a cowboy poet, musician and podcaster, collects oral histories of the Old West the way rodeo champs collect belt buckles. He's a champion of cowboy culture, and he has the hat to prove it.

"I think there's something about that image that just resonates with people," he says. "They know cowboys represent some of the best of American values—independence, honesty, hard work. And when they hear it, they're hearing real, authentic stories from cowboy culture. They learn the real truth behind the cowboy image."

Cowboy poetry also extends to music, with songs like "Rounded Up in Glory" and "Little Joe the Wrangler." Roy Rogers and Gene Autry brought that style of music to the silver screen, although the Hollywood version is not at the heart of the genre.

Authenticity inspires events across the country, from the Cowpoke Fall Gathering in Loomis, California, to Old West Days in Valentine, Nebraska. Minnesota annually declares a Cowboy Poetry Week, and Andy is returning to Jonesborough, Tennessee, where he performed several times. Cowboy music has even made it to the world-famous Carnegie Hall.

DISCOVERY

Andy, who lives in Lubbock, Texas, is part of a movement that began in 1985, when a group of cowboys met in Elko, Nevada, for the inaugural National Cowboy Poetry Gathering. It's where cowboys swap tales, sing songs of the range and recite poetry that fills lonely days and nights.

What makes a poet a cowboy poet? Andy says his friend Vess Quinlan explains it this way: "He told me there's two ways you can make a deposit in the cowboy poetry bank. One is by being a working cowboy who writes poetry. The other one is to be a non-cowboy who writes poetry that is so good, it becomes accepted by working cowboys. And, of course, it has to be authentic. It has to ring true to those people."

"A lot of people write or recite cowboy poetry or sing the old cowboy songs or write new songs," Andy says. "The truth is a lot

of us, including myself, have never made a living as a cowboy."

Andy has spent years immersing himself in cowboy culture's history, poetry and music. "I try really hard to represent the culture in an authentic way," he says.

He grew up hearing stories of his dad, who worked the rodeo circuit before becoming a Primitive Baptist preacher. He watched old Hollywood Westerns and listened to Western music. "All I really thought I wanted to do was be a cowboy," he says.

But his true obsession with cowboy culture began when he saw an episode of "Austin City Limits" featuring Michael Martin Murphy and friends. Those friends included cowboy poet Waddie Mitchell, cowboy singer Don Edwards and the groups Sons of the San Joaquin and Riders in the Sky. "It just opened that world up to me," Andy says. "I didn't realize there were people who still sang the old songs. I'd never heard cowboy poetry before I heard Waddie on that show."

A self-taught guitarist, young Andy learned some of the old songs. "It was really the beginning of a lifelong obsession with cowboy poetry and cowboy songs," he says.

By the time he could drive, the homeschooled teen was traveling to cowboy gatherings. By 20, he made it to Elko, where he's appeared 17 times. Since recording his album of duets, "Ride On, Cowboy," he and some of the album's guests have appeared on the Grand Ole Opry and practiced, practiced, practiced their way to Carnegie Hall, where they performed for an appreciative audience in March 2024.

The music has an international audience. While travelers come to the United States for gatherings, some performers also toured overseas. Andy even traveled to Turkmenistan as part of a cultural exchange. "The cowboy has always been the folk hero of America," he says. "People identify with that image. You know, when I traveled to Turkmenistan, or just travel overseas not performing, when I wear a cowboy hat, people love that and immediately associate that image with the United States." 📺

SWAPPING STORIES

Cowboy poet and musician Andy Hedges will be the teller-in-residence at the National Storytelling Center in Jonesborough, Tennessee, Sept. 2-6. Andy has participated in the National Storytelling Festival before.

"It's a really fantastic gathering of all kinds of storytellers from different traditions," he says of the festival. "I was honored to be there representing the cowboy tradition and sharing cowboy poetry with them." As teller-in-residence, he'll perform a concert every day, make media appearances and take part in other community events. For more information on the event, go to storytellingcenter.net.

To learn more about cowboy culture, check out Andy's podcast, "Cowboy Crossroads." You can download episodes at andyhedges.com/cowboy-crossroads.

Celebrating a Timeless Classic

Mason prepares for annual Old Yeller Day celebration

Story by LAZ DENES



Photos courtesy of the MBE Memorial Library

Cristi Slocum was 8 years old in 1999 when she attended a festival that still brings fond memories. Laura Bush, then the first lady of Texas, was among the dignitaries on hand at Mason County M. Beven Eckert Memorial Library for the dedication of a new statue depicting fictional character Travis Coates and his faithful dog, Old Yeller.

Mason native Fred Gipson created the timeless story of the boy and his dog that inspired the beloved 1957 Disney film “Old Yeller.” Garland A. Weeks, official Texas State Sculptor at the time, was commissioned to create the statue, as well as the many replicas later sold in fundraising efforts by the library board, Friends of the Library and the Mason Study Club.

Cristi remembers her admiration for the first lady, her humble beginnings as a schoolteacher and her awe at seeing her at the dedication. The event culminated with a roundtable discussion about Fred and his works, which included Gipson family members and biographer Mike Cox.

Today, Cristi plays a role in putting on what’s become an annual event known as Old Yeller Day.

“I remember being at the very first one,” says Cristi, who, after spending her college years at Texas Christian University and the University of Kansas, returned to Mason and ultimately assumed the role of library director in March 2020. “The timing worked out perfectly that I would end up here, and I couldn’t be more proud to do what I do.”

Cristi and the Old Yeller Day committee she oversees have been hard at work putting the final touches on this year’s event, set for Sept. 20 at Heritage Park. It’s packed full of food, games, arts, crafts and the ever-popular dog parade. The day ends with a screening of the movie that inspires the gathering. It’s all a public service provided by the library and its board members. [🔗](#)

A contest for Old Yeller and Travis look-alikes brings out creativity and canine companions.

Event Highlights

Saturday, Sept. 20

9 a.m. Drive-thru rabies clinic, free to the first 50 to 100 pets. It's held in the Senior Center and County Extension Office parking lot, next to Heritage Park.

9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Food and artisan vendor booths. Free arts and crafts activities and games for the kids throughout Heritage Park. Also, an interactive, living history encampment will portray the cavalry of Fort Mason.

11 a.m. Dog parade, followed by the Travis and Old Yeller lookalike contest. Registration is at 10:30 a.m.



ABOVE: From coonskin caps to cowboy hats, look-alike contest competitors strive to become the character Travis Coates.

LEFT: Local artisans spin yarn during Old Yeller Day.



Mason County M. Beven Eckert Memorial Library

410 Post Hill St., Mason
325-347-5446
Facebook,
@MasonTexasLibrary



Adobe Stock image
by W&S Stock

Dinner on a Stick

Kabobs make for easy meals, quick cleanup

Do you ever crave an easy meal with meat and vegetables? Try putting kabobs on the menu. It's a tasty grill-friendly choice, and cleanup is easy.

Begin with a tender cut of meat like top sirloin, which is affordable. Filet also works well. If you'd like, substitute chicken or tofu. Just remember to cut your protein portions to about the same size so they cook evenly. You can add as many chopped veggies as you like.

Begin with a fresh marinade. Homemade chimichurri does double duty as a marinade and seasoning sauce—it works for any protein. Round out your meal with crunchy Asian coleslaw and a fresh apple cake for dessert.

Photography by **Mark Gilliland**
Food Styling by **Rhonda Gilliland**

GRILLED CHIMICHURRI STEAK KABOBS

CHIMICHURRI SAUCE

- 1/2 cup fresh cilantro, packed, leaves and tender stems
- 1/2 cup fresh parsley, packed
- 3 tablespoons fresh oregano or 3 teaspoons dried
- 1 lemon, zested and juiced
- 3-4 cloves of garlic
- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 teaspoons red wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

Put all ingredients in a food processor

and pulse until blended. Taste and season with salt and pepper as desired.

STEAK KABOBS

- 32 ounces top sirloin, or the protein of your choice, cut into 2-inch cubes
- 36-48 baby potatoes, golden or mini reds
- 2 medium bell peppers, any color, chopped into 2-inch pieces
- 2 small red onions, chopped into 2-inch pieces
- Kosher salt and ground black pepper



CRUNCHY ASIAN COLESLAW

- 2 packages ramen noodles, any flavor
- 2 16-ounce packages shredded coleslaw mix
- 1 cup slivered almonds, toasted
- 5 green onions, chopped
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 1/3 cup rice vinegar

Reserve the flavor packets from the noodles for another use or toss. Crush the

noodles and set aside. Toss together the coleslaw mix, almonds and green onions in a large salad bowl.

Whisk together the sugar, oil and vinegar in a small bowl until mixed. Add the dressing to the coleslaw mixture and toss to coat. Mix in the chopped noodles. Serve immediately. Makes 12 servings.

Note: You may prepare the salad in advance, adding the noodles just before serving so they are crunchy.

FRESH APPLE CAKE

- 1 cup oil
- 2 cups sugar
- 3 eggs
- 2 1/2 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup pecans or walnuts, chopped
- 3 cups apples, peeled and chopped

CREAM CHEESE FROSTING

- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- 16 ounces powdered sugar

- 8 tablespoons butter
- 2 teaspoons vanilla

Measure oil into a large bowl, then whisk in sugar and eggs.

Mix together the flour, salt, baking powder and cinnamon, then add to the creamed mixture, beating well. Add vanilla, then fold in nuts and apples.

Pour mixture into a greased 9-by-13-inch pan. Bake at 350 F for 50 minutes or until cake tests done. Cover with foil if it gets too dark around the edges.

To make frosting: Combine all frosting ingredients and spread over cooled cake.

After reserving some of the chimichurri to use during cooking and for dipping the cooked kabobs, combine the rest of the sauce and the cubed protein in a sealable bag. Set aside to marinate. Meanwhile, soak the skewers in water a minimum of 20 minutes so they don't burn on the grill.

Add potatoes to a large pot, cover with water and 2 teaspoons of salt. Boil for 5-7 minutes or until fork tender. Drain and rinse the potatoes. Let them sit in cold water to cool. Chop veggies and have them ready to slide onto your skewers.

Now it's time to assemble: Using a soaked skewer, put either a potato or piece

of meat on first, so the rest of the veggies don't slide off the end. Then alternate between meat, potatoes and veggies.

Prepare the grill to about 500 F. Once it's ready, place steak kabobs perpendicular to the grill grates. Grill 3 minutes on each side for medium doneness. If you use chicken, cook for 5-7 minutes. Tofu needs to cook about 10 minutes. While cooking, brush the reserved chimichurri on the kabobs.

Remove the kabobs from the grill and let rest for 3-5 minutes. Use the chimichurri as an extra dipping sauce, if desired. 🍴



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