

# CONNECTION



## Crafting Comfort

The handmade success of  
Quality Patio Furniture

MO-RANCH

FARM STAYS



By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO  
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

## Faster broadband benefits rural America

As the chief executive officer of NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association, I am proud to represent 850 small, independent broadband providers who are offering some of the highest possible broadband speeds to some of the most remote parts of the country. Thanks to NTCA members, many rural Americans have higher internet speeds than I have where I live just outside Washington, D.C.

We currently have a once-in-a-generation opportunity through billions of dollars of funding recently made available by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and other federal programs to bridge the digital divide and bring broadband to those who still lack it. As broadband is deployed thanks to this funding, we must ensure that recipients are using it to provide the best possible services.

Recently, Federal Communications Commission Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel initiated a process to redefine what it means to have broadband-speed internet, raising the standard. This move continues us down the path needed to give rural residents the internet service they not only need but also deserve as they connect to vital resources like telemedicine, online education, employment opportunities and much more.

A new, more realistic, standard provides a range of benefits, including clarifying the true needs of rural areas and the funding required to serve them.

We have long advocated that, as a nation, we need to aim higher and do better when it comes to setting broadband objectives. We applaud Chairwoman Rosenworcel's efforts. We look forward to continuing to work with the FCC and other agencies to bridge the digital divide. 📧

# A bridge to the future

## Your communications provider is your link to vital resources

The digital world increasingly weaves its way into our lives, replacing formerly physical resources, tasks and tools. Consider restaurants, for example. For some, scanning a QR code with your phone to view the options online has replaced physical menus.

Rapid expansion of digital resources was a trend before the pandemic, but it's only accelerated in the years since.

In an article this year for Wired — “The Digital Divide Is Coming for You” — Bhaskar Chakravorti, dean of global business for The Fletcher School at Tufts University in Massachusetts, described having broadband and mobile internet as table stakes. Without those services, you don't exist digitally, he says.

Your rural internet service provider is committed to bridging the digital divide between you and vital resources like these:





# What's the password?

## How to build — and remember — strong passwords

It's difficult to do anything online without piling up a few passwords. Using the same one for multiple sites can leave your private information vulnerable to cyberattacks, and devising strong passwords full of random letters and symbols can make them impossible to remember.

A good password doesn't have to be unintelligible, but it does need to be random enough to avoid any clear patterns. Here are a few helpful tips for building passwords that will keep your online accounts secure without forcing you to hit the "Forgot my password" link every time you want to log in.

**At least 12 characters** — the longer your password, the more difficult it will be to crack. In general, you should create passwords with a minimum of 12 to 14 characters. But more is always better.

**Change it up** — using a mix of different characters like numbers, symbols, capital and lowercase letters makes your passwords stronger.

**Avoid full words** — using your favorite team's name as a password

doesn't cut it anymore. In fact, you should avoid using any full words you might find in the dictionary. That goes for any common phrases, too.

**Diceware** — one exception to the above rule is the Diceware method. By stringing truly random words together, you can build a secure passphrase that is easier to remember than a jumble of letters and numbers. To help with this process, search for the Diceware Password Generator. It can randomly select between two and eight words to build your passphrase.

**Avoid obvious substitutions** — "Password" doesn't become stronger if you change it to "P@ssword." Avoid substituting obvious symbols for letters. If it has occurred to you, it has probably occurred to a hacker.

**Go to the manager** — if you're having trouble keeping track of all your logins, a password manager can help. Programs like Dashlane, LastPass and Keeper manage your passwords across numerous sites and devices, making it easier to avoid repeats. All you need to remember is one strong password, and you're set. 🗝️



## Tired of passwords?

### Apple may have the answer

At its Worldwide Developers Conference earlier this year, Apple demonstrated a new "passkeys" feature that may spell the end for passwords.

Rather than inputting a password for every site you visit, passkeys would use a biometric sign-in like the Touch ID or Face ID that currently exists on iPhones and iPads. Websites and apps on non-Apple devices would provide a QR code that sends authentication to the user's phone or tablet.

Just a month earlier, Apple joined with Google and Microsoft to support the development of new passwordless logins on both mobile and desktop devices. So, even if passkeys don't crack the code, you may not need to juggle passwords for much longer.

# The power of a cooperative

Your voice guides our mission

When it comes to a for-profit business, some would say a company is what it sells. The nature of the product defines the culture, the business's interactions with customers and how it spreads its message. At HCTC we also provide products and services. However, we strive to define our culture by our desire to serve our members with best-in-class value and customer service.



**CRAIG COOK**  
Chief Executive Officer

The day-to-day realities of the many job roles and policies needed to make that product possible can shape how a business operates, how consumers view it and even how employees view themselves. For HCTC, there's no doubt about our products or the expertise needed to make them possible. Simply put, we know rural communications better than anyone. Our roots are in telephone networks. After all, not that long ago, copper wires strung from pole to pole throughout our area were our primary ties to the world. Fortunately, we've moved well past those days, and we're now far more than a telephone company.

Today, we're a true communications hub using fast internet service to link you to the information you need. Our systems keep pace with the latest innovations to create the best experience for

you. Now, telephone services are only a single part of that product mix — one component of the complex, powerful and reliable infrastructure we've created to link our community to all the resources now at our fingertips. Streaming television and music. Telemedicine and online learning. Movies and social media. These are all modern necessities, and we make it possible for you to connect to them.

Our technical experts have the skills to maintain and support the latest systems. We train our staff to not only anticipate the questions you may have about your services, but also to have the knowledge to provide clear answers.

At a very basic level, the services we provide do define HCTC — at least in part. You see, we're more than simply a communications company. We are also part of a national community of organizations responsible for bringing services to areas larger national companies would not serve.

Unlike businesses that put profit or stock values above all else, cooperatives proudly go a different direction. We are member-owned — yes, you own a part of this company — and we put your needs and the needs of the communities we serve first.

Does that mean we're not worried about income? Of course not. We're vigilant stewards of the cooperative's finances. In a world of escalating costs and ever-changing technology, that's no small task.

As a cooperative, though, we're also governed by you through a board of directors elected by you. Other communications companies can't say the same, particularly the large national providers. We are part of the community, devoted to making life here better for everyone. In fact, that's a central principle of every cooperative — concern for the community.

We support local organizations and businesses through donations, scholarships and more. The members of our team live here, shop here and enjoy our rural way of life just as you do.

Together we've created HCTC, and we couldn't be prouder to serve you, our friends, our family, our neighbors and our cooperative members. Thank you. 🗨️

The HCTC Connection is a bimonthly magazine published by Hill Country Telephone Cooperative © 2022. It is distributed without charge to all member/owners of the cooperative.



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.

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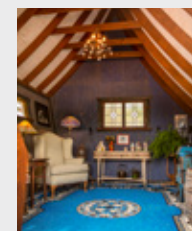
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**On the Cover:**



Jack Hudson created a successful woodworking business, one project at a time, with Quality Patio Furniture. See story Page 9.



# OCTOBER IS CYBERSECURITY AWARENESS MONTH

As your internet provider, HCTC wants to raise awareness on the importance of cybersecurity while you're online. Cybersecurity is a vital practice to combat phishing and social engineering attacks. Here are a handful of tips to implement:

- **Slow down:** Everyone is busy these days. Don't rush through the inbox clicking on unknown links, and think twice about those unfamiliar emails.
- **Ditch duplicated passwords:** Consider using a password manager to create unique passwords that help protect your data.
- **Multifactor authentication:** Take this extra step in case a password is compromised.
- **Keep software up to date:** Software companies frequently update their products once a vulnerability is found. Setting devices to automatically update ensures you have the latest, and most secure, version.
- **Add antivirus software:** To protect against malware and other email attacks, install antivirus programs and firewalls to defend against compromised websites and online threats.

# LABOR DAY UNWIND THIS WEEKEND

HCTC wishes you a relaxing Labor Day weekend. In recognition of the holiday, our offices will be closed on Monday, Sept. 5.



**Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.**

*Celebrating*  
**THE COOPERATIVE SPIRIT**

**OCTOBER IS NATIONAL COOPERATIVE MONTH**

*Together we create.....*

- » Better communities
- » Richer lives
- » Stronger businesses

**It's possible because of YOU – our members!**




# 2022

**ANNUAL MEETING**

**October 3, 2022**

Join us online for this year's meeting

Registration for door prizes opens September 14

Winners will be announced during the meeting

DON'T FORGET TO

# SAVE THE DATE

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



# A night on the farm

Agritourism is booming deep in the heart of Texas

Story by ANNE BRALY

In the Lone Star State, where vistas go on for miles unending and ranches extend into the sunset, there may be no better place to unwind and get away than a farm or ranch. Farm stays are a big thing these days with agritourism now an alternative to big theme parks and resorts.

It's a win-win for both guests and farmers. For guests, it gives them a few days off the beaten path.

"It's a way for farmers to show the inner workings of their farms, what it takes to grow food for their tables, who we are and the stories we hold. Also, it's nice to welcome city dwellers to our farm to bridge a growing urban-rural divide and offer them our countrysides for relaxation, calm, play and connection," says Scottie Jones, a farmer and founder of the U.S. Farm Stay Association.

And for small farmers, it's a way to make much-needed money for new equipment and for upkeep and repairs on old farm equipment and other needs. "In the last decade, the concept of hosting guests on one's farm has risen to the surface, especially as booking sites such as Airbnb and VRBO have made the daunting task of taking reservations much more easy to handle," Scottie says.

So if you're after a chance to unplug, here are some Texas farmers opening their gates to overnight guests.



## BlissWood Bed & Breakfast Ranch Cat Spring, Texas

For animal lovers, this 350-acre ranch on the edge of Texas Hill Country is the place to go with its herds of bison, donkeys and antelopes.

"People have learned the connection to nature and animals is so important to our well-being," says owner Carol Davis.

Carol bought the ranch 27 years ago and two years later opened it to overnight guests who come from larger cities around the state, as well as out-of-state travelers and some international guests looking to disengage from everyday life.

"I wanted to share this lovely place with others who are frazzled and stressed out in the city, offering a place to slow down and relax a bit," she says.

Overnight accommodations include romantic cabins for the two of you with private hot tubs. Or there are two-bedroom cabins perfect for a small family and larger houses that will sleep up to 10 people. You can also "rough it" in a safari tent beneath the massive oaks complete with luxury appointments and a private bathroom. Two RVs located around the show barn with views of the lake offer a different kind of glamping experience.

Rooms come stocked with







**Left:** Accommodations at BlissWood Bed & Breakfast Ranch, Cat Spring, Texas, include romantic cabins for two and houses that can sleep 10.

**Right:** BlissWood guests can stay in a log cabin.

**Inset:** The rustic charm of the BlissWood Bed & Breakfast Ranch has attracted visitors for about 25 years.

**Below:** The Cottages at Boldheart Farms, Dale, Texas, include one in the heart of the garden.



Photo contributed by Boldheart Farms

ready-to-eat breakfast fare — continental breakfasts are included in your stay — and special dining packages with things like pizza, beer and popcorn. Picnics on the ranch or chocolate-covered strawberries with champagne can be arranged.

*More information: [blisswood.net](http://blisswood.net)*

### **Cottages at Boldheart Farms Dale, Texas**

When was the last time you woke up to the scent of jasmine climbing the garden gate and the sounds of Arabian horses grazing peacefully in the nearby pastures? It's a scene that puts your soul in the right place.

There are two one-bedroom metal cottages — one in the garden, the other by the pond. Both have front porches where guests can hang out and read, write or even sleep. Owner Maggie Nicol opened the farm to guests with husband, Eric, just two years ago.

Picnic by the pond, learn to drive a tractor or tiptoe through the bluebonnets on a sunny spring afternoon.

The cottages offer comfortable bedding, air conditioning, kitchens and TVs, if you must. Guests can also enjoy a day on the farm with its ducks, hens, herbs, tomatoes and manicured gardens. A made-from-scratch breakfast is included in your stay each morning.

"I work diligently to give each guest a wonderful experience," Maggie says.

*More information: [thecottagesatboldheartfarms.com](http://thecottagesatboldheartfarms.com)*

### **Scurlock Farms Georgetown, Texas**

Frontage on the San Gabriel River turns the average farm stay into an adventure in the wilds of Texas Hill Country. Wildlife abounds on this 172-acre farm with good fishing, 9 miles of hiking and biking trails, or relaxation with a good book beneath

centuries-old majestic oaks.

Guests can interact with cattle, goats and horses or head into nearby Georgetown for shopping, art galleries or a meal at one of several charming restaurants in the nearby village of Salado.

Overnights are spent in one of two homes owners Sheron and Dan Scurlock have made sure will provide comfort for guests. One home has two luxurious king suites, and another is a one-bedroom house, formerly Sheron's mother's art studio. Kitchens come stocked with food basics and condiments.

Sheron and Dan have turned their farm into the perfect getaway for romance, work, vacation — whatever kind of escape you need.

*More information: [scurlockfarms.com](http://scurlockfarms.com)*



Hi, I'm  
Kerry  
Sutton

Want to hear more from the folks you read about in Connection? Then head over to [hctc.net/resources/podcast](https://hctc.net/resources/podcast) for "Inside the Connection" and "10 Minute Tech Tips," our podcasts hosted by Kerry Sutton.

DEVICE  
OF THE  
MONTH



## Meta Portal TV

The Meta Portal TV brings video calling to your television through your favorite apps — including Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp and Zoom. You can connect with friends and family on whatever devices they're using. The Portal TV's smart camera adjusts automatically so you can move around the room and remain in frame and in focus. It also comes with Alexa built in and is a streaming device with access to Netflix, Prime Video, Sling and Facebook Watch. MSRP \$149 and as low as \$80 on Amazon.

# Go beyond Google

## Search engines can provide the answers you want

If you've ever wondered about internet search engines and wanted to learn more, odds are, you've thought about Googling them.

No surprise there, as Google's search engine is so dominant it has joined the ranks of Kleenex, Velcro and Band-Aid — brand names that have become interchangeable with the generic product. However, just as there is lip balm beyond Chapstick, there is search beyond Google. Try some of the sites below if you're looking for more options.

Going with YouTube is a bit of a cheat, since it's owned by Google. But with about 500 hours of video uploaded every minute and more than 2.5 billion users, it's a very popular search engine for video and music content.

Microsoft's Bing is a good search engine that tries to be a more visually pleasing experience than its main rival even as it offers many of the same features. Bing uses similar ranking factors as Google, but is different enough that it will produce other search results. It also tends to favor a website's overall authority and relevance.

DuckDuckGo is ideal for those who value privacy. While Google keeps your search history forever and tracks its users to deliver personalized advertising, this alternative promises to never store a user's personal information. It even offers extensions for your browser of choice that include private search, tracker blocking and site encryption.



One of the survivors of the early search engine wars, Yahoo! takes a more-is-more approach to its site, which includes not only its search bar but news, weather, trending topics and access to its email service. It's great if you're feeling nostalgic for that old-school internet homepage vibe.

## BETTER SEARCHING

As more and more content is available online, sometimes it's difficult to find what you're looking for. Try some of these advanced tips to improve your results:

- Use quotation marks to search for words in an exact order or to highlight a search term that must be included in the results.
- If you want to exclude a word from your results, add a hyphen (or minus sign) next to it.
- Limit your search to a specific site. For example, to find ice cream recipes in The New York Times, type `site: nytimes.com ice cream recipes`.
- Put it together! To find chocolate ice cream recipes in The New York Times — hold the fudge — you would search `site:nytimes.com ice cream recipes "chocolate" -fudge`.



# A place to relax

Quality Patio Furniture aims to help you enjoy your outdoor space

Story by ANNE BRALY

Jack Hudson developed a love of woodworking as a young man. He majored in industrial technology at Southwest Texas State University (Texas State) and, following graduation, taught woodworking at Memorial Parkway Junior High School in Katy. But after five years of teaching, he set out on his own, launching Quality Patio Furniture in Ingram — a company that now attracts an international clientele — in 1997.

If you've ever been to the Turks and Caicos and stayed at Sandals Resort, the chairs you sat in at dinner were likely Jack's products.

Tennis fans who've visited the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in Flushing, New York, may have admired some of his furniture, and alumni of Stanford University might've taken a seat in one of his creations. Some of the West Coast's most popular wineries are clients, too. "We have furniture all over the United States," says the craftsman. "Our furniture is also up and down the East Coast on beach boardwalks and beyond."

## WHY OUTDOOR FURNITURE?

The decision was a simple one, and it's remained his focus for 25 years. "I thought there was a greater need for outdoor furniture because a backyard is the biggest room in the house," Jack says.

Jack stays busy year-round making a wide range of designs using pressure-treated

Southern yellow pine coated with a tinted waterproofing sealant.

"His furniture is so comfortable, sturdy and attractive," says his wife and the business's co-owner, Jennifer. "It's meant to be used outdoors and will last in all weather conditions."

The list of designs, many original and made only by Quality Patio Furniture, is extensive. The company accepts custom orders, as well. Deck chairs are the most popular pieces. They follow a pattern with a specially designed curve that's so comfortable occupants need no cushion. Customers have loved the chairs so much that the company has developed an entire line with the same features, including couches, porch swings and gliders.

Quality Patio Furniture has built a strong reputation for its attention to detail, and word of mouth has boosted the company's profile. "Customers often tell their friends and family about our quality and how well our furniture holds up over the years," Jack says. "I am grateful for all of the support from local Hill Country customers, camps and businesses."

Internet from HCTC has boosted sales, too, via the company website, [qualitypatiofurniture.net](http://qualitypatiofurniture.net), and its Facebook page, Jack Hudson – Quality Patio Furniture. In a time when big box stores dominate the landscape, Quality Patio Furniture remains small, intentionally. 📧



Jennifer and Jack Hudson and their dog, Zumi



Jack's friend, Andy Hickner, helped build the pavilion and sales office.

## ON THE MAP

Driving down Texas Highway 39, Quality Patio Furniture is hard to miss with its whimsical, Dr. Seuss-inspired office with a curved roof and crooked stove pipe — a local landmark. The showroom, too, is eye-catching with its open-air structure meant to showcase the many designs available for outdoor living. Quality Patio Furniture is located at 994 Highway 39 in Ingram.

[qualitypatiofurniture.net](http://qualitypatiofurniture.net)

[facebook.com/Jack-Hudson-Quality-Patio-Furniture-184150644993762](https://www.facebook.com/Jack-Hudson-Quality-Patio-Furniture-184150644993762)



Quality Patio Furniture



Employee Conn Carson assembles an octagonal picnic table.



Patio furniture is showcased at the pavilion.

Photos by Gabe Herrera

# Find your wavelength

Podcasts let you tune in to your passions



Podcasts have seen an explosion in popularity in recent years, thanks to their variety and the connections hosts forge with their listeners. If you've never listened to a podcast before, you can think of them like prerecorded radio shows on your favorite topics.

But, because listeners can download podcasts to a phone or computer and play them at any time, audiences can go as deep or as light as they want on a given topic. Podcasts also don't require the full attention video does, meaning you can drive to work, answer emails or cook dinner — all while continuing to enjoy your favorite programming.

In the early days of podcasting, following your favorite show meant navigating a technological obstacle course of downloads and synced devices. Today, the process is as easy as downloading an app.

Apps like Apple Podcasts and Stitcher make it easy to search thousands of the latest podcasts and subscribe to your

favorites for free. If you have the Spotify app, you're already set. Just go to the Search tab and choose "Podcasts & Shows" to start adding new discoveries to your list.

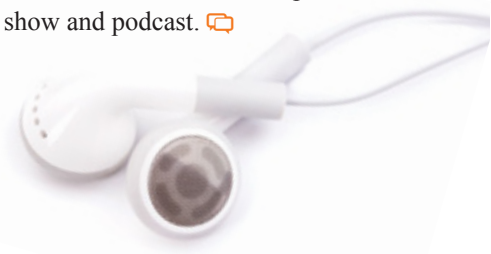
Not sure where to start? Here are a few of our favorites to get you going:

- ▶ **"Criminal"** — One of the first true crime hits, even before "Serial" hit the scene, "Criminal" tells the "stories of people who've done wrong, been wronged, or gotten caught somewhere in the middle." Going beyond tales of murder, it takes a critical look at the impact of crime on its victims and perpetrators.
- ▶ **"This American Life"** — "This American Life" has been on the air since 1995, so there are plenty of stories to catch up on. Described as little movies for radio, each episode is also a little different. But they all tell the true, entertaining and often surprising stories of the people and events shaping our American lives.

▶ **"The Big Picture"** — Struggling to keep up with the latest movie releases? Hosts Sean Fennessey and Amanda Dobbins run down all the movies you need to see while also discussing old favorites and interviewing the people behind them twice a week.

▶ **"Lore"** — Truth is scarier than fiction in this documentary podcast series that explores the dark corners of history. Gather around the audio campfire to listen in on true historical tales, legends and folklore biweekly.

▶ **"Sound Opinions"** — Chicago music critics Jim DeRogatis and Greg Kot know everyone's a critic. Each week, they get together to discuss music's greats, talk shop with artists and share their opinions on the latest releases on this independent radio show and podcast. 📻







# The newest spectator sport

Streaming platforms like Twitch let gamers build massive followings

**G**amers have thriving online communities, including platforms like Twitch, that give millions of fans from around the world a place to share their knowledge and experience, while also providing countless hours of entertainment.

## WHY WATCH INSTEAD OF PLAY?


Staying up to date with the latest and greatest video games can be expensive and time consuming. Sometimes game descriptions and reviews aren't enough — it's better to see a game in action. Avid gamers can check out a Twitch stream to see if a game is right for them, gain insight into a game's features, and find updates and creative fixes to problems. Many people subscribe to Twitch channels just for the entertainment value.

It's also a way to engage with others in the gaming community. Live broadcasts

feature an interactive chat where viewers can talk with the streamer and other viewers. These connections with like-minded people and interesting personalities keep people interested and coming back for more.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF STREAMING YOUR GAMING?

There are many incentives for live-streamers. The revenue potential can be sky high — some streamers have built careers, earning millions and striking deals with game publishers to get exclusive early access to the newest games.

The higher a streaming channel's subscriber count, the more opportunities the streamer has for exclusive marketing partnerships. Viewers can also donate to the channel during the broadcast. The biggest Twitch streamers get most of their income from paid subscription fees. 

**While the Twitch website and app are still the most popular, other platforms have sprouted up as well.**

## YouTube

YouTube's gaming section, [youtube.com/gaming](https://www.youtube.com/gaming), has functions similar to Twitch, and it's gaining popularity with amateur streamers because its optimized search engine makes it easier for a beginner's content to get noticed.

The audience is shared with YouTube, so the potential pool of viewers is vastly greater than on Twitch. For streamers, YouTube has greater potential for earnings from advertisements.

## Facebook Gaming

Facebook Gaming is growing as existing Facebook users check out the video gaming hub that can be easily accessed through the main social media site or [FB.gg](https://fb.gg).

There's also a Facebook Gaming app enthusiasts can download to discover content, connect with other gamers and casually play mobile games. Like the other popular streaming platforms, Facebook allows users easy access to uploads from their favorite streamers. But, like its main site, Facebook Gaming users can join groups and like topics to tailor their timelines to their specific interests.



# Finding sp

## There's s'more to Mo-Ranch than just campfires

Story by KATIE TEEMS NORRIS

Mo-Ranch is a special place for everybody, according to Julie Chapa, vice president of sales, programs and operations at Presbyterian Mo-Ranch Assembly. Located in Hunt, Mo-Ranch's 500 acres of Texas Hill Country offer a place of respite to church groups, students, families, summer campers and individuals, regardless of faith background or church affiliation.

For 2022, the Mo-Ranch team launched the Mo Gives Back! program as a way to strengthen relationships between the ranch and other local nonprofits. Mo-Ranch is giving every employee 16 paid hours to volunteer at any nonprofit or volunteer group. They can do anything from walking dogs at VA Dogs of Texas to painting at the Doyle Community Center or simply brightening another person's day at Mercy Gate Ministries.

Mo Gives Back! culminated with the inaugural Mo-lympics in July. The large event was open to the entire community and featured food and entertainment along with a three-legged race, cornhole, canoe races, rope swings and more. The \$25 entry fee directly benefited a local nonprofit organization.

### CAMP ORIGINS

Mo-Ranch has operated since 1949 and it gets its name from the late Dan Moran, the ranch's former owner and CEO of Conoco. Some of the ranch's original structures, such as the mansion, dormitories and stables, are still in use. "We get the chance to reap the benefits of a great infrastructure and beautiful piece of

property now," says Tim Huchton, president and CEO of Mo-Ranch.

Moran enjoyed hosting youth and scouting groups, and Mo-Ranch is continuing his legacy with robust programming for youth, church groups, corporate teams and families. The Presbyterian Synod of Texas purchased the property after Moran's death in 1948, and the ranch became a retreat and conference center for men, women and children throughout the region. "Over 30,000 people each year come to Mo-Ranch as a place of respite and just to get away," says Huchton.

Those getaways include family reunions, church retreats, conferences, corporate retreats and, especially, youth events. "Youth programs and providing a safe place for youth to come is needed more today than it's ever been needed before," says Huchton. "Mo-Ranch designs youth programs so that children can feel connected to each other, find a sense of community and learn valuable life skills."



Hannah Loveland, a former field instructor for the Environmental Leadership Program, leads a class at the Mo-Ranch garden.

Photo contributed by Mo-Ranch

### CREATING CULTURE

Building up the next generation delights all of the staff members, many of whom grew up going to Mo-Ranch. Huchton tells a story in which he and Chapa witnessed a child stepping up to put away dishes and trash another child left behind after a group meal. "Those are the types of things we're trying to instill in our youth with our programs — to do the right thing even if nobody is watching and to know what we're doing is making an impact everywhere we go," says Huchton. "Mo-Ranch now offers season passes for our neighbors to come and enjoy all Mo-Ranch has to offer."

Mo-Ranch is an important part of the lives of visitors and staff. With its 75 years of service, the organization keeps looking to the future to find ways to serve guests and its local community. That service includes fiber internet with HCTC. "While we understand we want people to get away," Huchton says, "we also understand you have to have access to high-quality technology. Having high-speed internet,




# pace

people can bring their families out here, continue to work and also get to hang out on the riverfront with their family inbetween work meetings.”

High-speed internet access on the ranch is crucial to corporate teams, teachers and school groups, as well. “We were just able to have a giant Texas Parks and Wildlife conference here because we had the streaming ability,” Chapa adds.

Because of fiber internet, Mo-Ranch is better able to connect with the rest of the world and strengthen ties to its local community in Kerr County. “We understand that it’s our job to set the table so that anyone can come to Mo-Ranch and experience Christian hospitality,” Huchton says.

In this way, he says, “everybody gets to come here and experience what it is God has in store for them.”

Visit Mo-Ranch on the web at [moranch.org](http://moranch.org) to learn more about its programs and how you can plan your stay and get involved. 



## NATURE'S CLASSROOM

One thing that separates Mo-Ranch from other camps is its robust educational programming. For 25 years Mo-Ranch has been “getting kids familiar with the outside world,” says Outdoor Education Ministry Manager DJ Owens.

Owens recalls a conversation that cemented his desire to work with youth at Mo-Ranch. A boy pointed at the sky one evening and asked, “What are those?”

“He was talking about the stars,” Owens says. “He’d never seen stars before because he’d never left San Antonio where there’s so much light pollution.”

Mo-Ranch’s outdoor education ministry has three prongs – personal growth, outdoor skills and environmental education.

### PERSONAL GROWTH

Personal growth encompasses “anything where the participant is pushing themselves and striving to get better” while having fun, says Owens. This includes the ropes course, zipline, giant swings and climbing sessions.

### TEAM-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Owens says, “We make each individual team-building activity custom for each group because no two groups are the same.”

### OUTDOOR SKILLS

Owens says, “My biggest thing is to try to help the spark start” to get children interested in getting outside. Entertaining and instructive activities

Mo-Ranch visitors can observe a working beehive.



Photo by Gabe Herrera




Mo-Ranch President Tim Huchton and an Eagle Scout collect life vests after a day on the water.

Photo contributed by Mo-Ranch

include canoeing, paddleboarding, hiking, compass navigation and archery. Mo-Ranch is also developing mountain biking and outdoor cooking programs.

### ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Taking advantage of the land’s pristine riverfront and nature trails, the environmental education program allows children to get hands-on experience learning about freshwater ecology and wildlife ecology, which includes: water cycle and water pollution, insect collection, local flora and fauna, a reptiles class and an observation beehive.

The children get to use all five of their senses, rather than just reading about nature in a book. Owens’ programs give the campers a full tactile experience. 



# It's time to go LOW AND SLOW



Cooking ribs at a low temperature for a long time tenderizes the meat and adds delightful flavor.

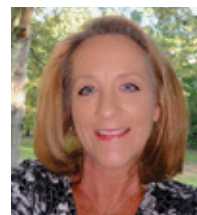
The aroma of smoke wafting through the air as meat slowly cooks goes hand in hand with a lazy summer afternoon. Smoking is not the same as grilling. There's a science to it that scares off some cooks, but break it down step by step, and you can become quite adept at making tender briskets and fall-off-the-bone ribs.

Smoking, more commonly known as barbecuing, takes time and patience. Defined simply, the technique takes a tough piece of meat and cooks it slowly over indirect heat for extended periods — often 12 to 16 hours and sometimes even more — while the smoke flavors the meat and gives it its mouthwatering flavor and texture. Any expert will tell you that the key to the best barbecue — that kind that wins competitions — is cooking it low and slow.

Cooking over high heat tends to dry the meat out very quickly. Any moisture within the meat is essentially blasted out, leaving it tough, dry and difficult to chew. Smoking meat slowly at a low temperature, on the other hand, keeps the moisture from evaporating too quickly, allowing you to achieve the perfect combination of tenderness and juiciness.

Here are two recipes that are good for beginners.

The 3-2-1 rib recipe is one many home smokers use. This method is easy and generally foolproof, creating ribs that are so tender you can pull the meat off the bone with your fingers. And pork butt is basically a no-brainer. Just rub it down with your favorite blend of seasonings or use the recipe that follows. Place it on the smoker and within just a few hours, you'll have tender pork perfect for sandwiches. Add a side of beans and some potato salad, and you'll have the makings of a beautiful, tasty summer dinner.



FOOD EDITOR  
**ANNE P. BRALY**  
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Photography by MARK GILLILAND | Food Styling by RHONDA GILLILAND



## 3-2-1 RIBS METHOD

1 rack of ribs  
Your favorite rub  
Your favorite barbecue sauce

### STEP THREE:

Liberaly coat the ribs with rub and allow them to “marinate” while you bring the smoker to 225 F. Place the ribs in the smoker, and add whatever wood chunks you want — cherry or hickory are popular. Smoke the ribs for 3 hours, maintaining the 225 F temperature. If you are smoking thinner back ribs, you may want to smoke them for just 2 hours. Any longer, and you may find the ribs dry out too much.

### STEP TWO:

The second stage is when the

meat tenderizes. Remove the ribs from the smoker and wrap them tightly in foil. This steams the meat and the result is tender, juicy ribs. Just before closing each rack of ribs in the foil, put a little bit of beer or apple juice in with the ribs. This helps the steaming process. Put the ribs, wrapped in foil, back in the smoker for 2 hours at 225 degrees.

### STEP ONE:

This final stage is when you sauce the ribs. Use your favorite barbecue sauce to liberaly coat the ribs on both sides before placing them back in the smoker for a final hour. The result should be a rack of ribs you'll never forget.



## SMOKED BUTT

*Smoked pork butt is a good one for beginners. The meat is not expensive, and the result is a mouthful of summer.*

- 1 (7-8 pound) bone-in pork butt
- Olive oil
- Water

### Dry rub:

- 1/4 cup light brown sugar packed
- 2 tablespoons black pepper, coarsely ground
- 2 tablespoons kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon dried minced onions
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper

### Spritz:

- 1/4 cup apple juice
- 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar

**Prepare the smoker:** Fill the hopper of your smoker with wood pellets, applewood, hickory, pecan or cherry. Start the smoker on the smoke setting for 5 to 10 minutes. Increase heat to 250 F.

Fill a small baking dish with water and set aside.

**Prepare the pork butt:** Place all dry rub ingredients in a small bowl and stir with a fork to combine. Place pork butt on a baking sheet and rub the entire butt with olive oil. Sprinkle the seasonings over it and rub them in, covering every bit of the butt.

Place the baking dish filled with water on the grate on one side of the smoker.

Fill a small spray bottle with the apple juice and apple cider vinegar and set aside.

Place pork shoulder on the grate and close the lid. Keep the smoker temperature around 250 to 275 F while smoking during these first several hours. Smoke for approximately 4 hours, spritzing with the spray bottle every hour.

Check the internal temperature of the pork using a meat thermometer. By this time, the pork should be at least 145 F.

Completely spritz the pork one last time and carefully wrap it in aluminum foil. Place pork back into the smoker and lower temperature to 225 F. Smoke pork about



A perfectly cooked pork butt is a great start to a summer sandwich.

another 4 hours, but do not spritz during this stage of cooking.

Check the internal temperature of the pork shoulder using a meat thermometer. You're looking for your pork shoulder to be about 200 F. Anywhere from 195 to 205 F is a good range. Remove pork from the smoker and let rest for at least 20 minutes but up to 2 hours. Shred or chop as desired. 🍴



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# 2022

## ANNUAL MEETING

### October 3, 2022

Join us online for this year's meeting  
Registration for door prizes opens September 14  
Winners will be announced during the meeting

DON'T FORGET TO  
**SAVE THE DATE**

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.