

CONNECTION

Uncorked potential

The growth of Majek
Vineyard and Winery

CRAFTY
SOLUTION

RURAL
RETREATS



—By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO—
NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association

Any room can be a classroom

Broadband opens a world of new educational opportunities

Soon, students will end summer break and return to classrooms and, in communities fortunate enough to be served by a member of NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association, they will have advantages once thought impossible in rural areas.

While fast, reliable broadband service creates opportunity for everyone, our students benefit significantly. Resources that were simply unavailable before are now only a few clicks away.

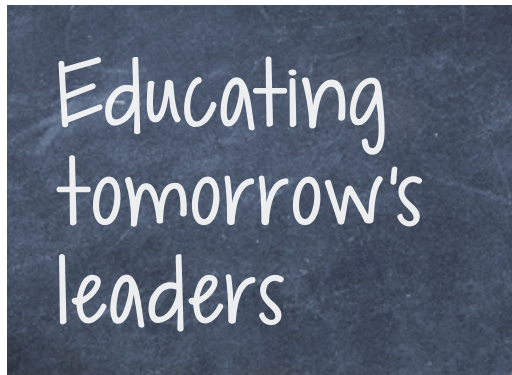
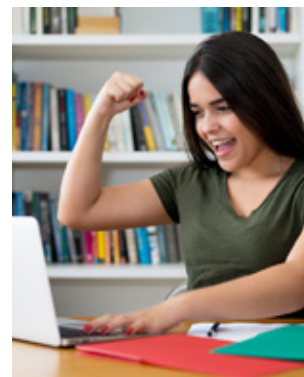
Once, learning about great art meant gazing at photos in a book. Now, students can take virtual tours through the greatest museums on Earth and, hopefully, find inspiration in the masters of the art world. Resources like Project Gutenberg make classic books a click and download away.

Digital resources also go far beyond virtual libraries and museums. Thanks to distance learning — real-time sessions connected through video — students in the most remote communities can tap into advanced or specialized classes otherwise unavailable in their area.

One key focus, and an acronym, you may have heard a lot about is STEM — science, technology, engineering and math. The skills learned in classes such as these are foundational. They can open the door to a range of jobs, higher education opportunities and more.

At the NTCA, we hear stories of these successes daily, because our members, including your communications provider, make a tangible difference in the lives of those they serve. The more tools we provide our students — the people who will become our future leaders and innovators — the richer our communities will become.

Every day, our NTCA members work to make that future a reality. 📶



Welcoming clouds

Digital storage brightens the day



Whether sharing work files, snapping photos with your phone or dozens of other actions, your digital data most likely doesn't remain solely on your device. Instead, those files were probably shared through a cloud-based service. Similarly, most phones default to backing up your photos to the cloud.

In fact, the cloud is one critical presence in our digital lives, an experience often so seamless you might not even realize it's there.

But, exactly what is the cloud, and how does it work? Think of it as a collection of computers designed not only to store critical data, but also to back it up securely and deliver it on demand to whatever device you choose. That's how you're able to work on the same file at home as you would at school, at an office or just on the go with a mobile device.

HOW IT WORKS

When you subscribe to a cloud provider such as Apple, Dropbox, Google, Microsoft or many others, you can upload files to a data server managed by that company. In some cases, the files are both on your device and in the cloud. Or, they may strictly be in the cloud, saving room on your device. These files can be photos, videos, documents with text, emails or more. As long as your device is connected to the internet and you are logged into the service, you can access this digital library. The cloud providers work hard to make it all as seamless as possible.

CLOUD ADVANTAGES

Cloud storage saves space on your devices. It's also a good way to preserve files as a backup. Rather than keep one copy of

your data, cloud services keep multiple copies on many machines to create as reliable a system as possible.

Many businesses use cloud storage to offload the responsibility of managing physical servers or running complex software. Another benefit of using the cloud is that you can increase or decrease storage based on how much you need, matching the price of the service to your requirements.

EXAMPLES

Apple's iCloud, Microsoft's OneDrive and Google Drive are popular cloud storage options for individuals. Cloud storage is also used by social media and entertainment companies to provide services to the public. For example, Facebook manages its own private cloud services and data centers. Instagram and Pinterest are also cloud-based. If you've ever used Netflix to watch movies, then you were also using a cloud computing service.

Popular personal use of cloud storage includes family photos and important financial documents such as tax returns. Businesses might use cloud storage for employee files, financial data such as payroll and to store customer data.

BACK UP THE CRITICAL FILES

Cloud storage provides a range of benefits, but with vital information — anything from wills to family photos, digital art and beyond — consider the cloud as just one part good digital housekeeping. Consider creating three versions of these files: one in the cloud, a second on a computer hard drive and a third on an external drive. Rely on the cloud for convenience, but keep backup for, well, a rainy day. ☔

New connections

Virtual and real-world connections build communities

Connections make our lives richer. Whether through a friend, a family member or a stranger offering a helping hand or a smile while you're out running errands, positive interactions lift our spirits and enhance our sense of community.



KELLY ALLISON
General Manager

It's also possible to build meaningful relationships virtually — through social media, video calls or shared experiences like streaming the same movie as your friends and sharing your thoughts about it. If you've ever searched through one of the many streaming services to find a movie or show a friend was raving about, you're definitely not alone.

Nielsen, a company that tracks how Americans watch TV and consume other media, recently released a report with some striking numbers. Between February 2021 and February 2022, the average time spent streaming television in the U.S. increased by 18%. That translates into an average of just less than 170 billion minutes of weekly video viewing. Colorado Valley Communications has seen a 240% increase in internet traffic over the past two years and

much of that is due to an increase in streaming of content.

As a company that works hard to provide high-quality internet service to make that viewing experience as seamless and enjoyable as possible, those numbers reflect a clear success for our industry. While that study focused on TV viewing, it's just one example of how the traffic on our internet highways is increasing as the journey gets more interesting. Unlike a busy freeway, where a trip can pass in a blur, all this digital hustle and bustle can actually give us more opportunities to appreciate and spend time with those around us.

How we use high-speed internet service goes far beyond just entertainment. Career-focused sites like LinkedIn promote networking among professionals, and relationships built there can help someone perform better in a current job or make connections that open doors to fresh opportunities.

Similarly, sites like Indeed.com, ZipRecruiter and Monster.com specialize in matching individuals with job openings ideal for their skills and experience. With the growth of remote work jobs, these services are no longer a benefit — they're essential to connecting employers from around the country, and even the world, to you and your neighbors.

Online communities don't just make connections across thousands of miles, they can also foster bonds much closer to home. Social media platforms like Nextdoor and Facebook, particularly with its ability to create topic-focused groups, can link neighbors in new and powerful ways. Something as simple as a post about a missing pet, or as helpful as a notice about an important meeting, or local event, can be the starting point for new friendships. These services can strengthen the glue that connects us to one another.

The list of examples of how authentic relationships can be bolstered, or even originated, online is seemingly endless. Every day social media helps far-flung former classmates to stay in touch and allows new parents to share the first photos of their newborns with friends and family around the world.

Make no mistake, there's no replacement for all face-to-face interactions. However, access to fast and reliable internet service creates new opportunities, fresh perspectives and deep resources. Our community is already rich and vital, because of the people who live and work around us. If we're thoughtful, the wealth of digital tools that are only a click away will make us even stronger and allow us to build and maintain the connections that matter. 📞



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To sign up for fiber, view planned construction areas and learn more about the fiber project, visit cvctx.com.

Customers in several parts of our service area can access fiber to the home, while expansion for access is in the works for other locations.

For more information on Colorado Valley's service area, visit cvctx.com/maps. The area served by the Cooperative can be seen in the link for Colorado Valley Exchanges. Fiber availability outside the Cooperative service area can be seen under the Colorado Valley Communications header.

Produced for CVCTX by:



On the Cover:



Lynne Majek's family has an incredible history on the land which ultimately became Majek Vineyard and Winery.
See story Page 8.

WE'VE GOT A *fresh* NEW LOOK

Check out our new website
cvctx.com



Our new support page will feature quick links to the most vital information all in one place. Find relevant data on a wide variety of topics, including alerts and notifications, technical support, account information and much more. CVCTX continues to listen to our member-customers on ways to improve access to our services and customer information.

VISIT OUR ONLINE RESOURCE PAGE

Our resource library has the answers to many questions.

- Payment options and bill explanation
 - SmartHub
 - Online Directory
 - Fiber FAQs
- cvctx.com/support

LET freedom RING

We wish everyone a safe and happy July Fourth holiday. Our offices will be closed **JULY 4** for **Independence Day**. Assistance is always available through the 24/7 tech support line at 877-452-9035.

Con-GRAD-ulations



scholarship winners!

Colorado Valley Communications has awarded \$60,000 in scholarships. Twelve graduating seniors will receive \$5,000 toward their post-secondary pursuits.

Congrats to this year's scholarship winners and best of luck as you further your education.

Flatonia High School

Laura James

La Grange High School

Bryn Colón, Abigail Eindorf, Maddi Mach, Kaitlyn Tarnowski, Isabella Wick

Round Top-Carmine High School

Ilse Salinas, Jordan Stanley

Schulenburg High School

Jordan Sommer, Blane Warnken

Weimar High School

Caitlyn Klam, Sydney Psencik

EXTENDED SUMMER HOURS

Friday, June 3 — Thursday, Aug. 11

Monday to Thursday: 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Fridays: 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.



find time to *unwind*

Recharging at Texas retreats

Story by ANNE BRALY

Getting away from it all in the wide-open expanse of the Lone Star State is a time-honored tradition that Texans, long known for their sense of adventure, hold dear.

Here are some tips from Mary Bemis, founder of American Spa magazine, on making the most of your retreat.

Extreme experiences – Check your good sense at the door, and if it doesn't feel right, speak up and don't do it.

The setting – Think about what kind of environment makes you feel safe. Going to a place without cell service, phone service

or internet can be liberating – or just anxiety-inducing.

A good retreat is often a well-marked path. You should know where you're going and what lies ahead. Prepare and take necessary precautions.

Busy amusement parks and crowded white sand beaches have their charms, but when you really want to relax and recharge, nothing beats a rural getaway and relaxing retreat to secluded locales with attentive staff and a whole lot of pampering. And in Texas, there's a lot from which to choose.



"From quiet, rural escapes to chic, modern wellness retreats, Texas offers a variety of options for those seeking to refresh their physical and mental well-being," says Tim Fennell, director of Travel Texas Tourism. "Relaxation getaways and retreats in Texas have always been popular types of leisure travel for travelers seeking to recharge, reconnect and reset."

Whether it's waking up to the views of the water or hearing the birds as they begin their day, take a step outside the city and you'll find retreats in the Lone Star State that offer just what you may need to get away from the busyness of life and the mental quagmire brought on by fist-bumping, social distancing and other pandemic protocols.

Here are some excellent examples of what's in store as you step off of life's beaten path.



Left: Enjoy a glass of wine at The Vineyard at Florence. Above and inset: Visitors can enjoy the views and relaxing evenings by the fire at Lakeway Resort and Spa.



LAKEWAY RESORT AND SPA

Lakeway

As the only resort nestled on the banks of Lake Travis in the Texas Hill Country, the 168-room Lakeway Resort and Spa offers a distinct getaway with a hint of the urban allure of nearby Austin. Whether it's wrapping your body in nourishing oils or massaging that tension in your back, a visit to the spa is a must. The spa's position on the shore of Lake Travis, as well as its floor-to-ceiling windows, offer dramatic views that tease the senses.

Two pools offer a choice. Want a break from the kids? They have their own pool where they can play on the waterslide and splash pad as you enjoy quiet moments of your own or a cooling drink at the swim-up bar.

There are options for all ages in one of several restaurants, from casual poolside dining to a more indulgent dinner at TR Restaurant Bar and Lounge serving comfort food and cocktails.

► Visit lakewayresortandspas.com for more information.

HOTEL RITUAL AND WELLNESS CENTER

Jacksonville

RITUAL is a retreat that will become a habit if you're in need of a magical experience. Bring a book and escape to wherever its pages take you. Soak in the heated pool and hot tub with a bartender at the ready. Then, go for some detox in the sauna, mineral water provided.

Gourmet breakfast is available at RITUAL, and there's a lively luncheonette where you can order salads, sandwiches or a beautiful bowl of warm peach pudding.

► For bookings and information, visit ritualonmain.com.



At Rancho Cortez, barrel racing brings excitement.

RANCHO CORTEZ

Bandera

If there's one retreat that screams "TEXAS!" it's Rancho Cortez. Visitors can restore their wellness the Western way at Rancho Cortez's Cowboy Wellness Program.

Ready for the roundup? The retreat's wellness program offers guests traditional wellness retreat experiences like hiking, outdoor workouts, nutrition classes and conditioned yoga and strength training, along with opportunities to explore the ranch by horseback. You can also feed the longhorns, relax by the campfire, soak in the hot tub or take a dip in the pool.

The dude ranch is open to day trips and also offers a two-week fitness program with strength training, pilates, yoga and more. Or, if you can commit, there's a 60-day program that will totally change your life. However, if you simply need a night or two to get away, the ranch offers a variety of overnight experiences, including a bunk house that sleeps up to 15 people.

All activities and meals are part of an overnight stay, and there's no sleeping in, cowboy. Breakfast is served at 8 a.m.

► To book, visit ranchocortez.com.

THE VINEYARD AT FLORENCE

Florence

It's a pleasure to wake up to the view of vineyards and luxuriate in comfortable linens. The Vineyard at Florence is like having your own small piece of Tuscany in Texas Hill Country.

The Vineyard at Florence is a retreat for the senses with its old-world Italian architecture and a spa offering facials and massages. Enjoy the farm-to-fork menu at its signature restaurant, Farmer's Commons, with its local honey, goat cheese from a nearby farm, a menu driven by what's in season and, naturally, a lovely wine list.

Each of the rooms and suites has either a patio or balcony, as well as a coffee bar, flat-screen television, refrigerator and walk-in, tiled shower. Suites also have a fireplace. The Winemakers Villa sleeps up to 10 people and is the perfect setting for a family retreat with its five bedrooms, three baths, living room with fireplace and fully stocked kitchen. Best of all, it overlooks the vineyard and has the best view on the property.

Florence is less than an hour from Austin, but there's plenty to keep you busy on-site with great places for picnicking, a swimming pool, biking and hiking. Or, arrange for a wine tasting. At night, sit back, look up and enjoy the night sky deep in the heart of Texas.

► For bookings or information, visit thevineyardatflorence.com. 📞

Family Harv

The legacy of Majek Vineyards

Story by LAZ DENES

When a Czech immigrant named Adolph Sassin arrived in Lavaca County shortly after the turn of the last century, having fled conscription into the Austro-Hungarian Army prior to World War I, he decided to start his new life on a 100-acre piece of land he purchased about 8 miles southwest of Schulenberg.

He cleared the property and began farming it using primitive equipment he powered with mules. He married, raised three children, and the family called the property home for three generations. A native of the Czech Republic's Moravia winemaking region, Adolph also made wine on the

property for his and his family's personal consumption. Little could he have known at the time that his land would be home in the 21st century to a flourishing vineyard and winery operation to which throngs of tourists and wine enthusiasts now flock from hundreds of miles in all directions.

Majek Vineyard & Winery is the creation of Lynne Majek (pronounced MY-yek), whose husband, Randy, is a maternal great-grandson of Adolph Sassin. Lynne and Randy lived and worked in San Antonio — Lynne as a marketer for a major telecommunications company and Randy as a respected banker — when they bought 20 acres of the original 100 in 2002, “just to have a place to go on weekends,” Lynne says.

“The family moved away after World War II, so the property had not produced crops for 50 years,” Lynne says. “The land returned to nature, with a fully grown forest. We’d come out here on the weekends with chainsaws.

“We found full-sized wine barrels underneath the house. It turns out Randy’s great-grandfather was crushing native grapes when he lived there,” she adds. “Now, it’s gone full circle with us growing wine grapes and making wine on the property.”

The vineyard idea first occurred to Lynne in 2011 when she got word her company was moving from San Antonio to Dallas in three years’ time — a change

she herself had no intention of making. “I had already fallen in love with the Texas wine industry, which is growing fast and is full of generous, helpful people,” she says. “So, I told Randy, ‘Maybe I could just learn how to grow one thing.’ And my intention was to grow grapes to sell.”

Lynne’s exit strategy during the final years of her corporate job was to earn a two-year viticulture certificate from Texas Tech University, which she completed in



2013. Shortly after, a half-acre each of Blanc du Bois and Black Spanish grapes were in the ground. Another half-acre of Black Spanish went in during 2015, as well as a tasting room — “because I figured out you can’t make money from a small vineyard,” Lynne says.

It was full speed ahead once she found herself laid off from her corporate job in



Guests enjoy a charcuterie board with pickled veggies and sausage.



est



Lynne Majek enjoys a bottle of wine with employee Caitlyn Hogue.

operations in the Pacific Northwest, for maintaining quality, variety and creativity in Majek's wine portfolio. Its flagship Blanc Du Bois Dry White and Cardinal's Kiss Black Spanish Rose head that collection. "Tim's been with us for four years, and it's been a huge blessing, not just in quality, but — you know how it is with wine — it can be a really bad science project," Lynne says. "We have always worked with a professional winemaker because we're not scientists or engineers like some of my peers. Randy's a banker, and I'm a marketer, and I know what experience I want to share with my customers. I really want my place to be a sanctuary for people who need a breath of fresh air and a place of rest."

The Old Tasting Room, once a rustic pole barn, allows guests to enjoy wine varieties in unique, oversized, shot-style glasses on Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays. Wine tasting moves to The Big Barn, featuring live Texas music each Saturday throughout the year.

Delicious appetizers, salads and sandwiches

created to pair perfectly with the wines, are available each day. Lynne puts her decades of experience as a marketer to full use in promoting her winery and vineyard, and she's thankful to have super-fast internet to make short work of her online sales and social media efforts.

"I'm a very dedicated customer of Colorado Valley Communications," she says. "We run multiple lines of high-speed internet, depending on the building. We're able to run our tasting room. We provide free Wi-Fi for our guests. We can do streaming — we can host business conferences with streaming — we really have the internet power to do anything we want, and it improves the value I can offer to my customers."

One popular question Lynne finds herself answering quite often is the significance of the red bird that is part of the winery and vineyard's logo. "It's a cardinal," she says. "When you see a cardinal, it represents your ancestors watching over you. We chose that as our icon, so to speak, because we do feel like our ancestors are watching over us here and are proud of us."

One of those ancestors would most certainly have to be Adolph Sassin. 📞

2015. The first harvest occurred that year, wine production on the property began in 2016, and Majek Vineyard & Winery took shape with a focus on offering everyone from nouveau wine tasters to sommeliers "a good glass of wine when they arrive," Lynne says. "We have 10 to 12 different wines at any given time. In addition to the Black Spanish and Blanc du Bois grapes we grow on the property, we also buy from other vineyards in the area because we need more than we grow. And then, we source the rest of our grapes from the Texas High Plains, which is the Lubbock area. They can grow just about everything up there with quality. We source our grapes that we can't grow here from up there."

Lynne credits winemaker Tim Drake, a 12-year veteran of the Texas wine industry who has had successful runs with the premier Columbia Crest and Chateau Ste. Michelle

Majek
VINEYARD & WINERY



From the dry Blanc du Bois to the sweet line of Cardinal's Choice wines, Majek Vineyard and Winery has a range of flavors customers enjoy.

Photography by Majek Vineyard & Winery

Back to School

Story by LISA SAVAGE



✱ **Make sure you have adequate internet speeds for students studying at home**

Many schools now offer more options for virtual days and online learning, whether it's for severe weather outbreaks, sick days or a family that has discovered that online learning works best for their child.

As a result, a reliable home internet service is more important than ever, whether it's for students who need to access online assignments, parents working remotely or for streaming movies and shows.

The Federal Communications Commission offers some tips to optimize your home network performance:

CHECK YOUR INTERNET PLAN

Check with your internet provider to find out the speed in your plan. Make sure it's enough to handle all the devices that might be connected at the same time, as well as any additional devices that could be added, such as televisions for streaming, laptops and more. FCC consumer guides provide information about household broadband use and broadband speeds.

TEST YOUR SPEED

In many cases, your internet provider has a speed test on the company website, or you can download broadband speed test apps or visit speed test websites, to check your current broadband download and upload speeds. Many providers, especially rural telecommunications cooperatives, strive

to keep download and upload speeds close to the same, which is important when it comes to online meeting platforms, which require higher upload speeds. Some national providers offer deals to get new customers, advertising high speeds. In reality, they may be referring only to download speed.

TROUBLESHOOTING

In most homes, internet service comes to the house and then operates through a wireless signal called Wi-Fi, which distributes the broadband throughout the home on a device called a router. Using multiple wireless devices on the same Wi-Fi network can impact performance.

Sometimes, rebooting the router — turning it off and then turning it back on — can resolve the problem.

If your internet provider doesn't supply the router, make sure it isn't outdated. Check the model number on the router to see if it's capable of providing the speed you're paying for. If your internet speed seems slower than it should be, contact your provider for troubleshooting tips, or ask if there are any outages or disruptions that could impact speed.

Whether they're in the classroom or learning virtually, almost all students need access to the internet to reach their potential. Making sure your broadband network provides the speeds they need is a big step in the right direction. ☑

Connected classrooms

Teachers maximize communication with students and parents

Story by LISA SAVAGE



How many times has this happened, parents?

You're running late as you get ready to leave home and drop the kids off at school as you rush to work.

As you go through your mental checklist, you think you're doing OK, and then your child says, "I forgot to study for my spelling test." The teacher sent the list of spelling words home on a note that's shoved deep into your child's backpack.

Now, the educational world is changing, using apps for classroom reminders, school activities and even payment in advance for athletic and other school events.

While many teachers still send notes and schedules home on paper, they also communicate the same information through apps.

Apps like Remind allow teachers and coaches to send out information about class assignments or practice schedules. Messages can be sent to a group or to individuals. About 80% of schools in the United States use Remind to connect students, teachers and families. It's designed for grades K-12 to communicate with everyone at once, and it has 20 million monthly active users across the United States.

Parents like the app because they receive early closing notifications instantaneously. All parents don't always see reminders that go out on social media.

The app reminds parents of homework assignments, dress up days and more.

It can lead to more participation in the classroom when parents get reminders because not all students show notes to their parents, and not all parents go through their children's backpacks to find them.

ClassDojo has typically been used for younger students and has group messaging and individual options, so the group may not necessarily see responses.

The app has messaging for group story posts, as well as individual student portfolios where teachers can assign work and students can turn in assignments. It also translates into over 35 languages.

Talking Points also features translation and options to communicate with families in their home languages to build strong partnerships during the school year.

Many school systems utilize platforms like Google Classroom, which also has access to such options as Google Voice for communication with students and their parents. For extracurricular activities like athletic events or stage performances, some school systems utilize GoFan, an app that offers online ticket purchases.

More and more schools are opting for the app purchase to avoid cash transactions. Some schools no longer even accept cash payments at the gate for events.

Since 2001, GoFan and its parent company, Huddle Tickets, have worked with over 10,000 schools selling over 20 million tickets — more digital high school tickets than any other company.

Other companies offer similar purchase availabilities through an app.

Parents, as another school year is about to begin, make sure you have the tools necessary to make meaningful connections with your child's teachers and school system.

Remind



GO FAN

TalkingPoints

From classroom reminders to athletic tickets, apps are increasingly essential.

SUSTAINING

The Jersey Barnyard becomes a haven for homemade goods

Story by LAZ DENES

Sometimes, just a little change of scenery does a world of good.

Such is the case with the La Grange Texas Farmers Market, which on the first Saturday of April 2020, moved just 3 miles up the road from its longtime home on the Fayette County Courthouse Square to State Highway 71 at a popular family farm known as The Jersey Barnyard.

It was initially a temporary solution to keep the dozens of local vendors in business at the outset of the 2020 shutdown. But it didn't take long for organizers to realize it needed to

become their permanent home each Saturday

year-round, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. "The square got shut down, but farmers were still pulling crops up out of the ground. We had people still baking bread and other goods. We had soap makers making hand sanitizer and crafters making face masks — all of those things you couldn't find in the grocery stores that were still open at the time," says Sheila McKnight, who helps run the farmers market and has been one of its vendors for the past eight years. "Ralph and Faith Frerichs, the owners of The Jersey Barnyard, offered us space on their farm because they thought it made sense to have a farmers market on their property."

It's been the perfect marriage with the century-old dairy farm hosting local crafters, woodworkers, growers and myriad other items of interest on Saturday mornings. "We're basically vendor-run. We police ourselves, just making sure that everybody follows the rules and making sure everything is cleaned up after we're done for the day,"

Sheila says. "It's a very family-oriented atmosphere. It's fun for the whole family to come out because people can come to the farmers market and do their shopping and then take the kids over to the farm and pet the goats, bottle feed calves and buy their milk and the meat from the farm store. They can get their breads, vegetables, fresh eggs, meats and milk all in one location."

The daughter of a crafter and a life-long crafter, herself, Sheila sells "a little bit of everything" under her Cactus Butt Creations brand. "I do goat's milk soap and lotions, sugar scrubs and all kinds of bath and body stuff," she says. "I have a pain ointment that I created. I have a salve that's very helpful with eczema and psoriasis. I also sell loose-leaf teas — some that are my own special blends, and they're all natural for medicinal purposes."

Sheila, whose Cactus Butt Creations takes its name from a hedgehog she once adopted from a city-owned animal control facility where she worked, also coordinates



Jack Wirthers shares his hardwood hobby of woodworking with customers seeking wooden toys or jewelry boxes.

Photography by La Grange Texas Farmers Market



Daniel Walker learned to make soap at age 7 for a homeschool lesson, and now sells the natural bars under the name Walker Brothers Beauty Products.

GROWTH

the online promotion of the farmers market. She was a La Grange resident and Colorado Valley Communications customer from 2000 to 2017, at which time, damage from Hurricane Harvey forced her family to move to nearby Waelder. She still uses high-speed internet to maintain a steady flow of imagery and information about the market and its vendors.

Kathleen Albrecht, who, with her husband, Leroy, lives in Giddings and works with Sheila to run the farmers market. She's known to her fellow vendors as "The Scrubby Lady."

"A scrubby is something I crochet with netting on one side and yarn on the other, and when you're cleaning your Corningware or Teflon or wanting to get bugs off your car, it won't scratch," she says. "Leroy and I are on Social Security, and the farmers market is a good place to make some extra money. We make homemade German noodles, jellies and we also have vegetables from our garden. I make picante sauce that sells really well. I love where we're at for the farmers market. Everybody is so helpful."

One of the more animated vendors at the farmers market is Bruce Ford, of Ellinger,

who many know as "The Bee Man." The former engineer took up beekeeping 12 years ago and enjoys not only selling honey on Saturday mornings, but educating anyone who will listen about the many positives of his new chosen profession.

"I look back and tell myself I should've quit my job 20 years ago," says Bruce, who's president of the Fayette County Beekeepers Association. "I'm having so much fun, and I know I'm making a difference by improving the bee genetics in the surrounding Central Texas area. My queens are getting out all over the place, and they're crowding out the more aggressive bees. The farmers market is a beautiful venue. It's perfectly made for people to get together and help build each other's entrepreneurship."

Bastrop woodworker Jack Wirthers doesn't hesitate to travel 40 miles to set up shop at The Jersey Barnyard whenever he can. "I looked at some venues to be able to sell products made out of wood, and it was one of the better venues that I could get into that didn't cost a lot of money," says Jack, who makes treasure boxes, jewelry boxes, display boxes and most anything made of wood. "There are places that cost

anywhere from \$300 to \$800 just to get in there, and I wasn't interested in doing that.

I go to La Grange every chance I get — at least twice a month. I like all of the vendors there. They all treat each other like family. Not only do they get along, but they help each other, and they buy off of each other, too. We have a lot of fun." 🍯

The Jersey Barnyard

3117 State Highway 159,
La Grange
Texasjersey.com
979-249-3406
@thejerseybarnyard
on Instagram and
Facebook



Kathleen Albrecht crafted a colorful way to clean pots and pans, earning her the nickname "The Scrubby Lady."



Beekeeper Bruce Ford sells the locally sourced honey for his business, Ross Creek Farms LLC.

Relishing SOMETHING NEW FOR veggies?

Extending shelf life may leave you in a pickle

For thousands of years, we've relied on pickling as a means of food preservation and storage. Since then, it's evolved into a culinary trend that extends well beyond the standard spears and slices that make up dill or bread-and-butter pickles. You can pickle almost any fruit or veggie to create briny snacks, colorful relishes and tasty garnishes.

We all know cucumbers can become delicious pickles. But watermelon rind is wonderfully sweet pickled. Turnips, asparagus, beets, bell peppers, parsnips, peaches and peppers can taste great after the process, too.

Pickling extends the harvest season well into winter when we long for the flavors of the summer garden. So, don't throw away the watermelon rinds from your summer picnic, and when you pick that peck of peppers, don't forget to pickle a few. 🥒

PICKLED PEACHES

- 3 cups sugar
- 2 cups distilled white vinegar
- 12 cinnamon sticks, divided
- 36 whole cloves, divided
- 18 soft peaches

In a large stainless steel stockpot over medium heat, bring 1 cup water, sugar, vinegar, 6 cinnamon sticks and 18 cloves to a boil, stirring to dissolve sugar. Reduce heat to medium-low and add peaches. Gently simmer, without boiling, until peaches are heated through and a fork pierces the fruit with no resistance, 10 to 15 minutes.

Using a slotted spoon, divide peaches among six sterilized, 1-pint canning jars, placing peaches pit-side down. Add 1 of the remaining cinnamon sticks and 3 of the remaining cloves to each jar. Ladle cooking liquid into jars, filling each to within 1/2 inch of rim. Wipe the lip of each jar rim with a clean, wet cloth to remove any syrup or bits of fruit. Then, top each jar with a flat lid and screw on a threaded ring band without tightening completely. Roll jars on their sides to release any air bubbles that might be trapped in the peach cavities. Turn upright. Remove ring bands and lids, and add more cooking liquid, if needed because of settling, to fill jars to within 1/2 inch of rim. Replace lids and threaded ring bands, tightening completely to seal. Store pickled peaches in refrigerator for up to eight weeks.





WATERMELON RIND PICKLES

- 2 pounds watermelon rind
- 1/4 cup pickling salt
- 4 cups water, divided, plus more for boiling
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 1 cup white vinegar
- 1 tablespoon broken-up cinnamon stick
- 1 1/2 teaspoons whole cloves
- 1/2 lemon, thinly sliced
- 5 maraschino cherries, halved — optional

Trim the dark green and pink parts from the watermelon rind and discard. Cut rind into 1-inch cubes and measure out 7 cups.

Put the watermelon rind in a large container with the pickling salt and 3 cups of the water. Add more water to cover the rinds, if necessary. Soak overnight.

Drain and rinse watermelon rind.

Cover the rind with cold water in a large saucepan. Simmer just until tender, about 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a nonreactive 6- to 8-quart kettle, combine the sugar, vinegar, cinnamon, whole cloves and remaining 1 cup water. Simmer the mixture for 10 minutes. Strain and discard the solids.

Pour the strained liquid back into the pan. Add the drained watermelon rind, lemon slices and maraschino cherries. Simmer the mixture until the watermelon rind is translucent, about 30 minutes.

Fill half-pint jars with the hot watermelon rind and syrup mixture, leaving 1/2 inch of headspace. Add the lids. Process in a boiling water bath for 5 minutes, and remove jars. Let the jars cool on a rack. Serve and enjoy. Properly canned, watermelon pickles will keep in a cool, dark, dry place for at least a year.

Note: If your jars didn't seal properly or you don't want to process them in boiling water, they will keep for about a month in the refrigerator.

REFRIGERATOR PICKLES

- 5 1/2 cups, about 1 1/2 pounds, thinly sliced (about 1/2-1/4-inch) pickling cucumbers
- 1 1/2 tablespoons kosher salt
- 1 cup thinly sliced sweet onion
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup white vinegar
- 1/2 cup apple cider vinegar
- 1/4 cup light brown sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons mustard seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon celery seeds
- 1/8 teaspoon ground turmeric

Combine cucumbers and salt in a large, shallow bowl. Cover and chill 1 1/2 hours. Move cucumbers into a colander and rinse thoroughly under cold water. Drain well and return cucumbers to bowl. Add onion to bowl and toss with the cucumbers.

Combine the granulated sugar, white vinegar, apple cider vinegar, brown sugar, mustard seeds, celery seeds and ground turmeric in a medium saucepan. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, stirring until the sugar dissolves.

Pour the hot vinegar mixture over cucumber mixture. Let stand at room temperature 1 hour. Cover and refrigerate 24 hours. Store in an airtight container in refrigerator up to one month.



PICKLED BRUSSELS SPROUTS

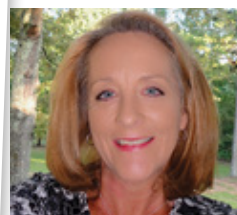
- 1 pound Brussels sprouts
- 1 1/2 cups apple cider vinegar
- 1 cup water
- 1 tablespoon pickling salt
- 20 peppercorns, divided
- 1/4 teaspoon yellow mustard seeds, divided
- 2 garlic cloves
- 2 bay leaves

Trim the sprouts and cut them in half. Set aside. Combine vinegar, water and salt in a stainless steel pot and bring to a boil.

Divide the peppercorns, mustard seeds, garlic cloves and bay leaves between two prepared pint jars. Pack sprouts into jars and pour brine over the sprouts. Use a wooden chopstick to remove air bubbles from jars.

Wipe rims, apply lids and rings and process in a boiling water bath for 10 minutes.

When time is up, remove jars from canner and let cool on a folded towel. When jars are cool, test seals. If seals are good, jars can be stored in the pantry (any unsealed jars should be refrigerated). Give pickles at least 48 hours before you eat them, so that the brine fully penetrates the sprouts. Sealed jars will keep up to one year on the pantry shelf.



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