Colorado Valley Communications

JULY/AUGUST 2024

CONNECTION



Feel like dancing?

Find your way to a local dance hall

FUN AT THE FAIR

PET-FRIENDLY TRAVEL

NTCA THE RURAL BROADBAND ASSOCIATION

RURAL CONNECTIONS

By Shirley Bloomfield, CEO
NTCA–The Rural Broadband Association

Serious security

NTCA members are committed to protecting you

Everyone should take cybersecurity seriously, managing passwords and being aware of all the possible threats to your personal information, finances and more. That's not meant to frighten you, because you do have help. NTCA member providers across the nation take your security as seriously as you do, and they work daily to secure the networks bringing you the critical internet-based services you need.

Recently, I had the opportunity to share more about NTCA's cybersecurity efforts for both consumers and broadband providers, including CyberShare: The Small Broadband Provider ISAC, through a meeting with U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency Director Jen Easterly.

CISA recently launched the Secure Our World program to raise awareness about cybersecurity best practices and empower the public to take proactive steps to protect themselves online. Resources available to the public include a public service announcement, tip sheets on topics like phishing, multifactor authentication and the importance of creating strong passwords and updating software. And there is even a bingo board to make this critical topic engaging for the youngest internet users.

Also, Cybersecurity Awareness Month each October highlights these important issues and emphasizes that you're also part of the team helping keep us all safe. While NTCA members work behind the scenes, you can help by recognizing phishing attempts, choosing strong passwords and more. Visit cisa.gov/secure-our-world for more.

Together, we'll help keep everyone safe and secure online.

Password management

Essential tools to keep you safe



Adobe Stock graphic by Jemastock

From work and school to games and streaming entertainment services, access relies on passwords. The U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency suggests you consider using a reliable tool to manage these key bits of information — password managers.

Memorizing complex passwords for multiple accounts is difficult, or impossible. So, sometimes passwords are too simple and easily hacked. Password managers, though, can help.



THE BASICS:

A password manager is a software tool that organizes all your passwords. Then, a single master code unlocks this vault — encouraging use of long, complex passwords.

FREE BUILT-IN MANAGERS:



Web browsers, including Safari, Chrome and Edge, have built-in password managers, and these can be accessed across devices like computers and phones. These may suffice for those with only basic needs, but they are limited. For instance, passwords in Apple's Safari aren't accessible on an Android phone running Google Chrome.



PAID TOOLS:

For more robust options, there is software like LastPass, 1Password and Bitwarden. These work across multiple types of devices and have additional features, such as the ability to generate passwords and integration into your favorite web browser.

TWO KEYS FOR SUCCESS:

Make your master password long, reliable and unique. Sixteen characters is recommended. Also, regularly review your stored passwords to remove passwords for accounts you no longer use.



From pages to pixels

E-books are changing the way we read



Photo by LightfieldStudios/Adobe Stock

Readers today can find themselves facing a technological conundrum. While many book lovers treasure traditional books, electronic devices, designed to make reading more comfortable and accessible, are hard to ignore.

For some, there's nothing like the sensation of holding a book and feeling the paper as the pages turn. Printed books will always have emotional, if not monetary, value as collectibles. And they certainly aren't going anywhere.

These days there are countless options of things to download and read on our phones and tablets, but dedicated, handheld electronic book readers, often called e-readers, offer text and lighting customizations and many other conveniences to enhance the reading experience. Nonreflective, electronic-ink displays give them a paper-like look and make it easier to read outdoors compared with reading on a phone or tablet. And, dedicated e-readers present fewer distractions — you won't be interrupted by notifications, calls or texts.

Over the past few years, the price of e-readers has fallen while the hardware has improved. High-end features, such as backlit, high-resolution screens and waterproofing, are standard. If you don't have an e-book reader, there's never been a better time to invest in one.

E-READERS' EDGE

- **Portability:** E-readers are lightweight and can store thousands of books.
- **Customization:** Most allow you to adjust the font and size, background lighting, etc. They can make reading accessible for individuals with visual impairment by providing text-to-speech and other customizations.
- **Searchability:** E-readers' built-in search functions mean you can easily find a favorite quote or passage in the book.
- **Built-in resources:** Dictionaries and thesauruses allow for immediate definitions.
- **Environmentally friendly and affordable:** No trees are harmed in e-book production, and they usually cost much less than traditional books.

WHICH ONE IS BEST?

Amazon Kindle is synonymous with e-reader for good reason. According to both Wired magazine and The New York Times' Wirecutter, the Kindle is the most affordable, best and easiest choice for reading electronic books.

- **Amazon Kindle:** With a 6-inch screen and a high pixel density for sharper text, the least expensive Kindle — around $100 on Amazon — offers just about all the advantages of the more expensive e-readers. If you're planning on reading outdoors this summer, it's worth the extra charge, roughly $50, to upgrade to the waterproof Kindle Paperwhite with its better lighting options.
- **Rakuten Kobo:** Japanese retailer Rakuten currently offers six Kindle-comparable e-readers ranging from $110 to $400. The Libra 2 has a physical page-turn button and Bluetooth support, so you can connect headphones and listen to audiobooks.
- **Barnes & Noble Nook:** The book retailer's e-reader features a touch screen and page-turning button, as well as the ability to annotate and highlight text. The devices start around $100. As an added perk, Nook owners can read the complete contents of any book for free while in stores for one hour per day.

What will you read?

Once you've settled on an e-reader, where do you find the books? Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Kobo all sell tomes to download to their specific e-readers. But you could read for years without having to spend another dime. Sources of free e-books include:

- **OverDrive.com**, used by 43,000 libraries and schools worldwide, allows anyone with a library card to pull e-books, magazines and audio books.
- **Project Gutenberg**, a library of more than 70,000 free e-books to download or read online. Thousands of volunteers digitize and proofread the books available at gutenberg.org.
- **Mybookcave.com**
- **Planetebook.com**
- **ManyBooks.net**
- **OpenLibrary.org**
- **GetFreeEbooks.com**

Enjoying our summer traditions

A time we celebrate together

We're in the dog days of summer. Did you know that phrase dates back to the Romans? When I hear it, I always think about long, hot days perfect for a dip in a creek or pool, or a family gathering beneath a shade tree. It's a time of year bookended by two of my favorite holidays — the Fourth of July and Labor Day.



KELLY ALLISON
General Manager

One of the many things I enjoy about my role with CVCTX is seeing all the ways our community comes together. We're more than a communications company. We not only want to provide you industry-leading services — like internet as fast as the summer is hot — but we also have a deep, lasting commitment to helping this place we call home thrive.

There's no better time than summer to experience the energy, bustle and cherished traditions that make being outdoors so enjoyable. From the many church picnics in our area to the Fourth of July with fireworks that light up the night sky to Labor Day and its laid-back barbecues, these holidays are benchmarks in the rhythm of the year. But they go beyond the festivities and events. They carry a deeper significance, a reminder of the values we hold dear and the ties that unite us.

For us, the Fourth of July isn't just about celebrating independence. It's about coming together as a community to honor our shared heritage and celebrate our freedoms. Whether it's an annual parade or a neighborhood party or church potluck, these traditions are uniquely our own. We see family and friends often enjoying the same events and places as our parents, grandparents and even older generations. Throughout it all, we also remember those men and women who served our nation, because we would not be where we are as a community or nation without their service and sacrifice.

And then there's Labor Day, a time to pause and reflect on the hard work and dedication that built our community and the nation's economy. Workers play vital roles in our past, present and future, and we're proud our services make much of this work possible. Often the economies of rural places like ours are dismissed, but we see the work and commitment that make the businesses in our region possible. These efforts are worth celebrating every day.

But perhaps what's most remarkable about these holidays — really this entire summer season — are the connections we make along the way. In a world that often feels increasingly disconnected, the traditions tie us not only to this place but also to each other, and we're all the better for it. Like our tagline states, "Where Connections Matter."

At CVCTX, we're acutely aware of the role we play in fostering this sense of community. It's a responsibility we welcome, whether that means providing access to high-speed internet, supporting our schools, sponsoring a game or any other service we can provide. Together, we make this place all that it is, and I look forward to seeing you out and about during the dog days of summer.

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CONNECTION
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To sign up for service, to increase your bandwidth or to let us know where to build out our fiber network next, 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:
Pioneer UTILITY RESOURCES

On the Cover:



Freyburg Hall and other dance halls across Texas are cultural touchstones for many communities, hosting nights of dancing and live music.
See story on Page 8.

Photo by Matt Ledger

CONGRATULATIONS

2024 scholarship winners!

Colorado Valley Communications awarded $70,000 in scholarships to members of the Class of 2024. Each scholarship recipient was awarded $5,000 and is a graduate of a high school within the CVCTX cooperative service area.

CVCTX's Rural Scholarship Fund is derived from money unclaimed by former members of the cooperative that would otherwise be deposited in the state's escheat fund. Funding also comes from earnings on money set aside by the cooperative for scholarships.

We wish the best of luck to all this year's scholarship recipients. We can't wait to see what you do next!



Colorado Valley Communications Board President Norman Schultz and General Manager Kelly Allison congratulate the 2024 recipients of the cooperative's $5,000 scholarships.

Photo courtesy of CVTC

Columbus High School
Brooke Wanjura

Fayetteville High School
Kayme Schley and Cash Smith

La Grange High School
Savannah Bretz, Cody Krupala, Ty Shrader and Kylie Zbranek

Round Top-Carmine High School
Jenna Hardaway, Kimberly Rohde and Magali Salinas

Schulenburg High School
Haylie Goode and Blake Helms

Weimar High School
Kelly McAfee and Ashley Treece



CVCTX's offices will be closed on **THURSDAY, JULY 4**, in observance of **INDEPENDENCE DAY**. We wish everyone a fun and safe holiday.

EXTENDED SUMMER HOURS

CVCTX's summertime schedule runs from Friday, May 31, through Thursday, Aug. 8.
Monday-Thursday: 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.
Friday: 7:30-11:30 a.m.





PET-FRIENDLY ADVENTURES

Map out trips with furry friends

Story by KATHY DENES

Summer typically means travel time, whether scenic road trips or flights to vacation destinations. And more than ever before, beloved pets are tagging along for the ride.

Pet-friendly travel is a hot topic addressed by top vacation resources like Conde Naste Traveler, which has an online list of nationwide hotels and Airbnbs it deems best for accommodating pets, especially dogs.

Meanwhile, on travelandleisure.com, search "pets" and you'll unleash a wealth of helpful articles. Even financial companies are weighing in. NerdWallet compiled a list of Best Hotels for Pets in 2024 — based on factors like fees and amenities — and rated air travel options, topped by Alaska Airlines. But if you don't want to do the research yourself, there are travel agencies that specialize in planning and taking care of the details for you.

Also, hotels, resorts, parks and campgrounds usually post their pet policies, fees and amenities, as do airlines, trains and even cruise lines that allow furry passengers. Many websites are focused entirely on pet-friendly travel. Just browse by city, state or destination at resources such as:

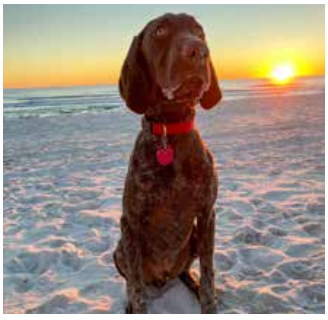
- bringfido.com
- petswelcome.com
- tripswithpets.com














EXPERT ADVICE

"Before deciding to bring your pet along on a trip, you need to ask yourself whether or not it's in your pet's best interest to do so," says Dr. Rena Carlson, president of the American Veterinary Medical Association.

What's a fun adventure for you could simply be too much for your pet. "If you choose to include your pet, a pre-trip veterinary visit is a good idea, to make sure your pet is healthy and up to date on vaccinations and microchip registration, and to obtain a health certificate, which is required by law if you're traveling to a different state with your pet," Carlson says.

Your veterinarian can also provide vital information about the risk of parasites and other diseases your pet could be exposed to at your destination, as well as possible preventive steps or treatments.

"Make sure to plan for their comfort in transit, whether by land or air, with regular breaks and by choosing the least stressful travel options," Carlson says. "Confirm in advance that your destinations are pet-friendly, and try to maintain your pet's routine as much as possible to help them feel secure. Your careful planning can ensure a safe and enjoyable trip for everyone involved."



For more great tips for traveling with your pet, check out:

» pettravel.com
» petfriendlytravel.com
» avma.org

YOUR OWN MASSIVE BACKYARD

The majority of information about pet-friendly travel focuses on dogs, but the basics apply for other animal passengers, as well. Planning ahead is the key to avoiding any unpleasant surprises like unexpected costs or your pet not being welcomed at all. Here are a few destinations that come highly recommended:

• While **Austin** is known for music, pet owners also sing the city's praises after enjoying stays at the elegant Hotel Ella, The Line and downtown's Aloft, among others. Pooches can join in on paddleboarding on Lady Bird Lake, where you'll also find the off-leash Auditorium Shore "beaches" and trail.

• **Galveston's** Strand and waterfront make for beautiful strolls, but its miles of beaches are a major draw. Dogs are welcome, but must be leashed. Also, bring your pet along for a boat ride to spot dolphins or for walking ghost tours.

• **San Antonio** is the perfect spot for hiking with your dog — along the River Walk, of course, which is lined with pet-friendly patios for frequent breaks. With most of the surface being concrete, be sure to take care of your pup's paws. Then enjoy a luxurious stay at the nearby Tapatio Springs Hill Country Resort.

• **Waco's** Magnolia Silos extends open arms to leashed pets, just not inside eateries or on the artificial turf.

• **Lubbock** Memorial Arboretum allows on-leash pets to enjoy its 93 acres of trails amid flowering open spaces, and admission is free. Located in K.N. Clapp Park, the arboretum is open daily from 5 a.m. to midnight.



The Mark Odom Band plays another set at Freyburg Hall.

Photo courtesy of Freyburg Hall

DUST OFF YOUR BOOTS!

Texas dance halls are still swinging

Story by JAMIE BIESIADA

For many Texans, dance halls are more than landmarks harkening back to a bygone era. They're more than just a place to cut a rug — they're cultural cornerstones in many communities, appealing to old and young alike.

Among them are the Round Top Rifle Association, which dates to 1873, and Freyburg Hall, established in 1912.

When Freyburg Hall reopened under new ownership last May, a cross-section of the community came out. "There were couples that could barely walk, and they were like, 'This is where I met my wife. We met at a dance here,'" says Chip Bubela, one of Freyburg Hall's owners. "There are just a lot of stories like that."



NEW LIFE FOR AN OLD HALL

Chip grew up in Schulenburg and frequented Freyburg Hall after football games, enjoying the classic "small-town USA" scene. He went to college and moved away for a while but returned to Schulenburg with his wife and children.

News started to spread that Freyburg Hall was for sale. Chip and his brother, Colton Bubela, partnered with Cale Kobza to buy it. "Why are we doing this? It was really as simple as to make our ancestors proud," Chip says. "That was what it was ultimately about. Make our ancestors proud, do something good for the community, and let's fix this little dance hall up."

Extensive renovations included a new HVAC system — and the addition of air conditioning — rewiring and new bathrooms. They kept as many of the original 1912 features as they could, including the flooring.

"Last year, when we first opened up with the American flags waving in there and the breezes coming through and the band playing, it was a surreal moment," Chip says.

LOCALS STILL DANCING

At more than 100 years old, Freyburg Hall has hosted everything from church picnics to hootenannies. Chip remembers square dances happening there when he was a kid.

One of the oldest dance halls in Texas, it took a while to establish. In 1892, members of the Schulenburg Order of the



Live bands set the tempo and atmosphere for dance hall events like Round Top Rifle Association's OktoBierFest and Blasmusik Texas Concert and Freyburg Hall's monthly performances.

Hermann Sons living in Freyburg established Kaiser Friedrich Lodge No.48. They met at lodge officers' homes since they had no hall. It took 20 years to save enough money to construct the spacious hall, which was completed in 1912. The hall was built to provide "gemutelichkeit," a feeling of well-being and hospitality.

Today, the hall hosts a variety of musical acts. A booking agent handles the entertainment and brings in performers sure to attract a crowd, like Aaron Watson, Cole Stephens and the Randy Carson Band. Local festivals like Maifest and Harvest Fest harken back to the dances Freyburg Hall once held. So, too, do evenings when locals, like Matt Bonner, play. "When he plays, people come out and dance, because he plays all your favorite songs," Chip says.

Freyburg Hall uses social media and email lists to share upcoming events, and also relies on word of mouth within the community. A full calendar of events is available on the hall's website, freyburghall.com.

Since the hall reopened, Chip says, "People have been so thankful and gracious, and just awesome."

150 YEARS OF SCHUTZENFEST

German immigrants also founded the Round Top Rifle Association — originally the "Round Top Schutzen Verein," or "shooting society."

The land where Round Top sits today was purchased in 1881, and its dance hall was built in 1882. The building's original purpose was encouraging outdoor activities, including cycling, target and trap shooting, athletics and dancing.

"The dance hall is there, and it's been added on to over the century or so, and it's a rather large venue now," says Ronny Sacks, a longtime member and past president of the Round Top Rifle Association. "Things have changed. We don't do the bicycle riding anymore or bowling or those types of activities, but we do continue the marksmanship."

Dances, too, continue, albeit a little differently than in the past. The soundtrack these days now heavily features country music, rather than waltzes and polkas.

The hall is open for public dancing about four times each year, Ronny says. That includes during Schutzenfest, an annual celebration Round Top has held for more than 150 years.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

The dance hall has also become an important part of Round Top's ability to maintain its facilities. The hall is available for rentals for weddings, anniversaries and other events.

It's also a community hub. "Every Monday night, we have a community social where we cook hamburgers and hot dogs," Ronny says. "People come out and have a few beers, eat a few burgers and catch up on all the community gossip."

The association is updating its cooking facilities with a large, covered pavilion behind the dance hall with new barbecue pits and indoor and outdoor coolers and freezers.

The association uses its website, roundtoprifle.com, to promote its events, including dances. The association is also active on Facebook under the name Round Top Rifle Hall.

Planting ideas

FARMER FROBERG USES SOCIAL MEDIA TO PROVIDE LESSONS, LAUGHS

Story by MELANIE JONES

Wearing a plaid shirt and a gray Froberg's Farm cap, Tyler Froberg shares a cool fact about a favorite fruit with youthful viewers. "Every strawberry in the world is picked by hand," he tells eager young minds. "And it takes half an hour to pick one row."

Most fruit and vegetables are harvested by machines, which helps the fourth-generation farmer talk about farming as a STEAM — science, technology, engineering, arts and math — career option he promotes in a video for Lego's education branch, known as Rebuilding the World with Agriculture.

Tyler has made a few videos for Lego, promoting school-based projects like building a strawberry-picking machine that won't destroy the delicate fruit. But his screentime isn't limited to collaborations with Lego. As Farmer Froberg, Tyler has more than 780,000 social media followers learning about gardening, farming and life on a fruit and vegetable agritourism farm.

TEACHING THROUGH VIDEOS

When he first got out of the Army, Tyler worked on the family farm in Alvin, Texas. "I decided that I had my GI Bill, so I should probably go to college," he says.

After earning a degree in agriculture, he worked for a year as an agriculture science teacher. "I loved it, and when you love something, you tend to be good at it, and when you tend to be good at it, you get recognition for it," he says.

"I think I achieved something that I never thought I would through social media."

— Tyler Froberg
@farmer.froberg



Tyler Froberg, known to his 780,000 followers as Farmer Froberg, took to social media so he could educate people about farming and gardening.



LEFT: Tyler, right, and his uncle, Alfred Froberg, show off watermelons grown at Froberg's Farm.

BELOW: Tyler enjoys making social media videos with his sons, or, as he calls them online, "Little Farmer Frobergs." Tyler and his son, Dustin, have fun sharing gardening lessons.



Photos contributed by Tyler Froberg

A nonprofit recognized Tyler as the person it needed to run a program teaching farm skills to fellow veterans. "When I was there, though, I missed the spark that you got with young people, whether it was seeing a seed germinate or seeing an animal being born," he says. "While I was teaching adults, I didn't see the same spark."

Around that time, TikTok became popular, and Tyler got an idea. "I should make little videos, like ag lessons," he says. "I'm still a teacher, and maybe that will scratch that itch. And so, I did."

In the first two months, several of his videos got a respectable number of views. "I had a video hit 10,000 views, and then I had a video hit 250,000 views, and I was like, 'Huh, there might be something to this.'"

Tyler has posted a few poems, tried growing square watermelons and loofahs, and succeeded in growing star-shaped zucchini. He's even zipped layers of jackets to the tune of "Stand by Me" — which got over 5 million views the first time he posted it. But his favorite videos to make are any with his sons in them. "We just laugh and have fun," he says, talking about "Little Frobergs" Dusty, Carson Lee and Tommy "Tomcat."

"I'm not one of those content creator parents that are like, 'No, no, no. You have to say that this way,'" he says. "It's only been three years, and so, it's still kind of new for us. They get excited to go out and film with me." Tyler's wife, Kristi, known on social media as "Momma Froberg," also gets the occasional guest spot.

STAGES TO SUCCESS

Tyler's made plenty of silly videos. His personal favorite involves being a rubber duck farmer. "There were these rubber ducks everywhere, and it was just a lot of fun," he says.

Despite his following on social media, Tyler doesn't consider himself an influencer. "Influencers are putting on makeup trying to influence you to use this certain brand or product, or there are ag influencers who create content for people in the ag industry. They work with brands and influence followers to use certain brands or products, and I don't feel like I do that."

Tyler says there are a few stages every content creator goes through. The first step is embarrassment. "You don't want anybody you know to know that you're creating content," he says.

"Then comes, 'So you're still doing that thing?'" he says. "That's when you see your mom and she's like, 'Oh, you're still making the little videos. It's so cute.'"

The third phase is thinking content creation is a waste of time. "You're starting to take it more seriously," he says, "but you're not getting a lot out of it yet."

Then there's the final step — success. "For me, I got invited to give a commencement speech at a college graduation, and walking out on stage and realizing, 'oh wait, I think I did it.' I'm still not 100% sure, but I think I achieved something that I never thought I would through social media."

What about those strawberry-picking machines?

"I would like to think that Lego went as far as they could with that and got hundreds of thousands of submissions for strawberry-picking machines, but I don't know that to be true," he says. But he planted the seed of an idea. Now it's time to see what grows.

CHECK IT OUT!

Tyler Froberg's videos are available on Instagram and TikTok at farmer.froberg. His YouTube and Facebook accounts are under the name Farmer Froberg. For more on his family's farm, go to frobergsfarm.com.



The heifer auction always draws a huge crowd at the Fayette County Fair.

Full speed ahead

Gearing up for the Fayette County Fair

Story by ELIZABETH CRUMBLY

Mike Zuhn's memory of being flung skyward aboard a midway ride named "The OMG" during last year's Fayette County Fair is vivid.

Mike, the fair board president, decided to approach leadership interactively, climbing aboard the ride with a fellow fairgoer. "His sweet wife held on to our cellphones as we spun around losing our sanity," he says. "We definitely were the oldest people on the ride by a wide margin. I keep daring directors to take the challenge."

Sky-high attractions, delicious treats, prize livestock and great music will again light up the Fayette County fairgrounds this summer. The county fair is a vibrant slice of Americana the La Grange community savors.

Pulling off an event that brings in 14,000 people is a year-round effort for a good portion of Fayette County's tiny population. Just days after the rides leave town, the fair board meets to assess what went well and what needs work before the next event, says Brandi Chovanec, fair board vice president.

The entertainment committee discusses production, fairgoers' feedback and possible entertainment for the next year before making its selections. Amarillo native Aaron Watson will be the premier main stage attraction this year, performing on Saturday, Aug. 31. On Sunday, Sept. 1, Texas native Rick Trevino will perform, taking the crowd back to the '90s with hits like "Doctor Time" and "Learning as You Go."

TEJANO CELEBRATION

Tejano Night, Friday, Aug. 23, will feature music by DJ Luna and Oscar Ayala, along with unique food offerings. It's a celebration of Spanish, Indigenous and Mexican heritage, and it's a big hit. "We've actually gained some members because we did that, and some really good people volunteer," Mike says. "We've had lots of compliments from the Hispanic community. They are supportive of what we're doing, and they're really happy that the fair has moved this direction."

Although Mike may not be getting on The OMG again soon, he and Brandi agree that the carnival, provided by Heart of America Shows, brings great rides. Last year's midway included a small roller



Photo courtesy of Aaron Watson





Photos courtesy of Fayette County Fair

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Mutton bustin' is one of the popular contests for youngsters at the fair. Aaron Watson is this year's headline musical act. Pageant contestants line up at the 2023 Fayette County Fair.

The Fayette County Fair
400 W. Fair Grounds Road, La Grange
fayettecountyfair.org
Find the fair on Facebook at Fayette County Fair Texas.

coaster and a super slide. In addition to the carnival, the fair association hosts Kid Kountry, with free activities for young children like a train ride, face painting, a petting zoo and clowns.

THE CATTLE BUSINESS

Another big draw is the fair's heifer show, scheduled for Aug. 23 at 5 p.m. in the Emily Fritsch Barn. Open to all local 4-H and FFA members, each exhibitor can auction up to three heifers at the sale on Aug. 24.

Youth exhibitors keep record books for their project, Brandi says, and farmers, business and community members come out to show their support. Last year's auction brought in about $450,000 from 136 heifers sold, with most of the money going back to exhibitors. "They walk away with some really nice checks, and they'll put that money toward their college education or starting their business," Mike says.

The fairgrounds has a symbiotic relationship with the rest of the community. Nonprofits use the property throughout the year. Habitat for Humanity and other local groups worked on some of the permanent structures. At fair time, a theater group helps with face painting and staffing the front gate, while civic organizations sell food and drinks. And Colorado Valley Communications' fast and reliable internet service powers much of the equipment. "They brought us fiber optic out to the fairgrounds, and it's made a big difference in how we operate," Mike says, adding that CVCTX has taken the event "into the 21st century."

Through good times and bad, the Fayette County Fair is a family-friendly way for locals to forget their own troubles for a while, cut loose and have a little fun. The fair will celebrate its centennial in 2027, a milestone that Mike says seems surreal. "That's hard to believe," he says.

In the pit

Barbecue is serious business at the Fayette County Fair. The annual BBQ Cook-Off will take place Saturday, Aug. 24, this year, and Jimmy Rohde will again be at the helm, just as he has for the past 25 years.

"We've got some very good cooks," Jimmy says of the contest, which is sanctioned through the Lone Star BBQ Society and regularly draws entrants from Houston and Austin. Contestants rack up points to put toward a spot in the Jack Daniel's World Championship Invitational Barbecue in Lynchburg, Tennessee.

Those vying for the grand champion title must cook three meats: chicken, pork ribs — either St. Louis-style or spareribs — and brisket. Jimmy does his best to bring in judges well-versed in aromas and tastes who can provide discerning decisions on the anonymous entries that weigh down their tables.

For competitors, Jimmy explains, "it's a lot of time and money."

Sensational SUMMER SALADS



Among summer's many charms are vegetables and fruit blooming with flavor, and it doesn't take a lot of effort to turn them into delicious salads.

These recipes cover all the salad bases. From crisp leafy tossed salads to sturdy mixes that can sit out for a couple hours while the kids play in the yard and you visit with friends. Keep it easy and choose a make-ahead recipe featuring hearty pastas, grains and beans that can work as a side dish or a full meal, or throw together fruit or vegetable combinations that hit sweet or savory notes.

Summer salads are versatile, so feel free to swap out lettuces, and use a variety of fruits instead of just one kind. After all, it's summertime, and the living — and cooking – should be easy.



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Photography by ***Mark Gilliland***
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BLUEBERRY PEACH SALAD

- 1 pint fresh blueberries
- 2 peaches, diced (leaving the skin on adds texture, vitamins and color)
- 2 cucumbers, sliced
- 1/2 cup crumbled feta cheese
- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped basil
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

In a large serving bowl combine the blueberries, peaches, cucumbers and feta.

In a jar with a lid or measuring cup combine the lemon juice, Dijon, honey, olive oil, basil, salt and pepper. Whisk together until well combined.

Pour the vinaigrette over the salad and gently mix everything together. Taste for seasoning and garnish with extra basil. Serve or cover and refrigerate the salad until ready to serve.



SUMMER CORN SALAD

- 3 cups corn kernels (approximately 4 ears)
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, quartered
- 1 cup cucumbers, diced
- 1 cup crumbled feta cheese
- 1/4 cup red onion, diced
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 1 tablespoon fresh parsley
- Fresh basil ribbons
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil and add the corn. Cook for 3 to 4 minutes or until the kernels turn bright yellow. Drain the corn and cool completely. Use a sharp knife to remove the kernels from the corn cob, scraping the cobs to get all the "milk" from the cobs.

In a large bowl, combine the corn kernels, cherry tomatoes, cucumbers, feta cheese and red onion. Drizzle the olive oil and vinegar over the salad.

Season generously with salt and pepper, to taste, and toss well to combine. At this point, the salad may be made ahead. Just before serving, sprinkle with fresh herbs, and toss to combine.



MAIN DISH TORTELLINI SALAD

Grilled chicken heightens the flavor of this salad.

- 2 (10-ounce) packages cheese tortellini, prepared according to package instructions
- 2 cups shredded chicken
- 1 cup halved cherry tomatoes
- 8 ounces fresh mozzarella pearls
- 1 cup roasted red bell peppers, chopped into 1/2 -inch pieces
- 1 cup basil pesto (store-bought or homemade)
- 1 1/2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- Fresh basil ribbons, for garnish

In a large bowl, combine the tortellini, shredded chicken, cherry tomatoes, mozzarella, roasted peppers, pesto and olive oil. Cover and refrigerate. Can be prepared up to a day ahead. When ready to serve, top with fresh basil.



SUMMER SHRIMP SALAD

- 2 pounds shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped red onion
- 1 rib celery, finely chopped

Dressing:

- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 lemon, zested and juiced
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- Pinch of freshly ground black pepper

Bring a pot of water to a boil. Add the shrimp and boil for 2 to 3 minutes, until cooked through and pink. Plunge the cooked shrimp in an ice water bath to cool.

Meanwhile, make the dressing: Stir together the mayonnaise, lemon juice and zest, dill, mustard, garlic, salt and pepper.

In a mixing bowl, stir together the cooled shrimp, red onion, celery and dressing, until creamy. Serve plain or nestled on butter lettuce leaves garnished with fronds of fresh dill, if desired.

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