Eastex Telephone Cooperative, Inc.

MARCH/APRIL 2022

CONNECTION

Celebrating Women of Eastex

STRESS AWARENESS MONTH

ROASTING RULES

NTCA THE RURAL BROADBAND ASSOCIATION®

RURAL CONNECTIONS

By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA–The Rural Broadband Association

Strengthening ties

Rural internet providers gain ground

No matter the challenges, NTCA members have a long history of stepping up to extend fast internet service to rural America, allowing residents to work, learn and engage with family and friends online.

Recently, we released our 2021 Broadband/Internet Availability Survey Report, reaffirming the commitment to rural broadband as the industry stands on the cusp of once-in-a-generation investment to bring connectivity to all Americans.

NTCA members responding to the survey indicated that nearly 76% of their customers can receive downstream speeds of at least 100 Mbps. That's up from 67.8% in 2020. Similarly, 55.4% of customers have access to gigabit downstream speed, up from 45.1% in 2020.

A year earlier, 28% of respondents subscribed to services with 100 Mbps broadband or better. Last year, that number was 37%.

These gains appear throughout the communities NTCA members serve, including in critically important broadband service to libraries, community colleges, state universities and extensions. There are 911 call centers and medical facilities that benefit, as well as nearly all primary and secondary schools, along with police and fire departments.

Despite the successes, NTCA members continue to face pandemic-related supply chain issues, leading to slowdowns in installing services for customers and delayed network construction. Still, these companies serving rural America continue to put your needs first, building networks that can change lives and communities for the better. As the 2021 Broadband/Internet Availability Survey Report shows, they're making a difference.

Back it up

It's as easy as 3-2-1

The reliability of technology, from computers to smartphones, is steadily increasing, which is good because we depend on it more now than ever. From personal photo libraries to essential financial records, digital archives have replaced physical filing and storage systems.

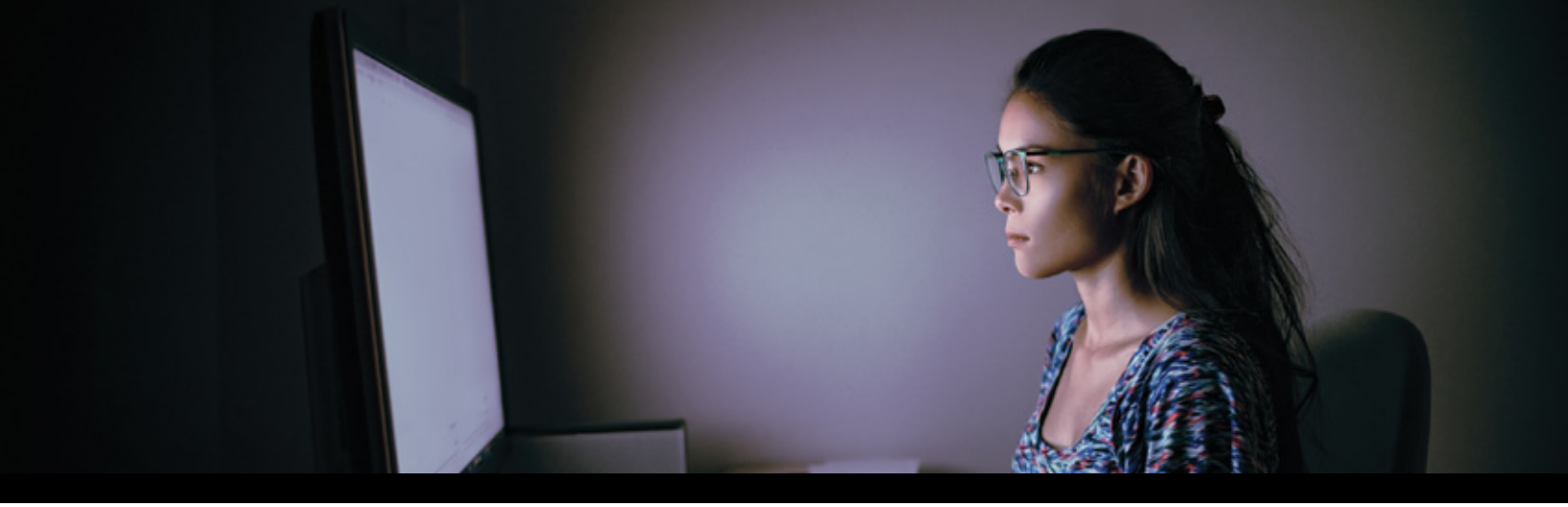
In fact, this information is so important, consider taking a lesson from corporations and data-intense industries — back it all up with multiple copies in strategic locations.

3 Your goal should be to have at least three copies of your important data — but you'll put each copy in a different location.

2 Two copies of your data should be stored at your home or office. Separate them, though. Keep one copy on a device such as a computer. But keep the second version on an external hard drive. Prices begin at less than $100 and then go up, based on the amount of data you need to store.

1 Send the final copy to the cloud, which can be both convenient and a hedge against a disaster damaging your home or business. Apple, Google, Microsoft and many other companies offer cloud-based storage solutions. For a few dollars a month, you can get digital peace of mind.

Coordinating those steps is also easier than ever. Modern computer operating systems offer options to automate most of the details.



Are blue light glasses hype or help?

According to the American Optometric Association, the average office worker spends seven hours a day in front of a computer — and that's only when they're on the clock. In our off-hours, we're often squinting at our smartphones, using tablets to catch up on the news or following the twists and turns of the latest best-seller on an e-reader.

After so much time staring at screens, many people experience digital eye strain, also known as computer vision syndrome. Symptoms can include everything from dry and tired eyes to blurry vision, neck pain, headaches and more.

Some folks are turning to blue light-blocking glasses for relief. Available in a variety of styles and a wide range of prices, these glasses purport to reduce eye strain by filtering out the blue light emitted by digital screens.

But are these lenses really all that they're cracked up to be? According to experts, maybe not.

WHAT IS BLUE LIGHT?

All visible light contains the entire spectrum of wavelengths, from red to violet, and each wavelength has its own specific energy level. Blue light has the highest energy level in the visible spectrum.

The sun is the source of most of the blue light we encounter, but blue light is also emitted by fluorescent and incandescent light bulbs and the screens of electronic devices. However, no measurable harm done by the light from digital devices has been documented.

Studies have shown that it's not the screens themselves that are causing eye strain but, rather, how we use them. We blink less frequently when looking at screens and we tend to hold electronic devices, particularly mobile phones, much closer to our eyes than paper documents. Also, glare, reflections and existing uncorrected or undercorrected vision problems can contribute to discomfort, as does focusing on screens for extended periods of time.

So, if blue light glasses won't help, what will? Believe it or not, taking breaks. Most symptoms of eye strain will resolve themselves when you stop using the computer. When you have to be in front of a screen for an extended period of time, experts like those at the American Academy of Ophthalmology recommend the 20-20-20 rule — after every 20 minutes of continuous screen time, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds.

BLUE LIGHT AT BEDTIME

While there isn't scientific evidence that blue light is responsible for digital eye strain, experts say there isn't any harm in wearing blue light glasses, and they may help at bedtime.

Blue light affects the body's natural waking and sleeping cycle, known as circadian rhythm. During daylight hours, blue light wakes us up and keeps us alert. But when it's time for bed, the blue light from screens can stimulate the brain just when you're trying to wind down for the night. This is why many devices have nighttime settings to minimize blue light exposure after dark. Experts recommend limiting screen time two to three hours before bed, but if you must use your devices in the hours leading up to bedtime, blue light glasses could help ensure a solid night's rest.

Better connected

Why rural broadband outshines the big guys

A high-tech web threads its way throughout our region, extending to homes, businesses, government offices, medical facilities and more. Eastex is at the center of that web, the hub linking you to the power of the internet. Together — because you're very much a part of this success — we've created an amazing resource.

RUSTY DORMAN
General Manager

But have you ever wondered how we stack up against other service providers? I'm sure you see advertisements for national communications corporations, and you may be curious if your local company keeps pace. Truthfully, there's a vast separation between how Eastex and corporate-owned businesses operate. Rather than a focus on returning value to faceless shareholders, we prioritize giving you, our neighbors, the best service possible at the most reasonable price.

When you consider the technological wonder of it all, it really is amazing. A global system of computers shares digital information, whether it's something as large as a streaming movie or as small as a few lines of text in a social media post. Physical cables link the servers, and some cables even run beneath the ocean.

Eastex is the local stop on this system, and we maintain the networking equipment needed to tap those massive streams of information. Then, we provide you access through the lines we've installed across the community — our community.

The differentiation between us and those national companies accelerates as we translate that amazing infrastructure into packages of services you can obtain. As you can see, there are plenty of moving parts, but we work hard to boil all of them down into straightforward, understandable service plans.

Here's one example. Our internet network is designed to provide you the fastest speeds possible, whether you work from home and share files with the office or rely on videoconferencing. Or, perhaps you're a gamer who wants an edge on the competition. Can performance vary at times? Certainly. Wi-Fi router settings and other variables in the home and at work can make a difference, but our network is designed to serve your needs as consistently as the technology allows. Most importantly, we work daily to improve our network to better serve you rather than just to support our bottom line. Can all the national companies say the same thing?

Similarly, it can be easy to promise one thing and deliver another. When you do business with Eastex, we strive to provide what we promise, and our service plans clearly spell out the service you can expect to receive.

While we enjoy the advantages of living in a rural community — and there are many — rest assured you have access to a communications network comparable to that of most metropolitan areas. In fact, many of those people living in cities would be envious, not only of the internet services available to you, but also the friendly customer support and honest communication Eastex provides. In the end, we are neighbors helping neighbors, and that makes all the difference.

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Eastex Telephone Cooperative, Inc.

A member-owned cooperative dedicated to delivering advanced telecommunications technology to the people in the Henderson, Livingston and Waskom areas.

Eastex is proud to offer broadband through Eastex Net, and security and automation services through ECS Solutions.

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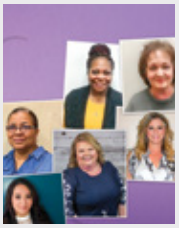

In honor of International Women's Day, we're singing the praises and honoring the accomplishments of our female employees.
See story Page 8.

What is the Affordable Connectivity Program?

The Affordable Connectivity Program is a Federal Communications Commission program that replaces the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program to help low-income households pay for internet service and connected devices.

If your household is eligible, you can receive:

- Up to a $30/month discount on internet service, in the form of a discount credit issued on your monthly bill
- Up to a $75/month discount for households on qualifying Tribal lands

Only one monthly service discount is allowed per household, and the benefit is non-transferable. When the Affordable Connectivity Program ends, or when a household is no longer eligible, customers will be subject to Eastex's regular rates, terms and conditions.

For more information on how to apply for the ACP benefit, go to eastex.com/affordableconnectivityprogram.

Game on!

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ANSWERS

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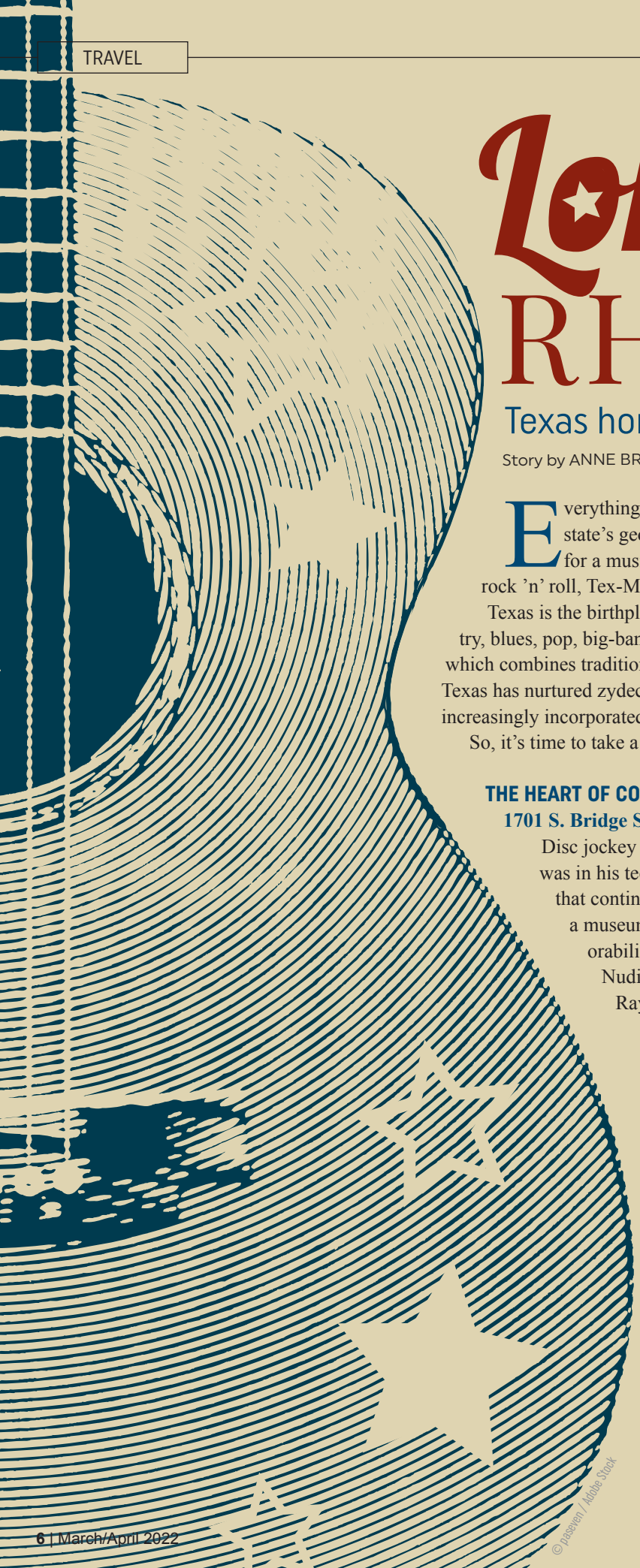
3	8	9	7	2	4	6	1	5
6	5	2	8	6	1	4	7	3

Good Friday

Eastex offices will be closed on April 15 in observance of Good Friday

Spring Forward

Don't forget to set your clocks ahead one hour. Daylight saving time begins at 2 a.m. on Sunday, March 13. Now is also a good time to replace the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.



Lone Star RHYTHMS

Texas honors its music in its many forms

Story by ANNE BRALY

Everything's big in Texas, and that goes for its music. It's as diverse as the state's geography and as vital as its people. The variety of genres makes for a musical patchwork quilt of country, blues, jazz, spirituals, gospel, rock 'n' roll, Tex-Mex and Cajun.

Texas is the birthplace of Western swing, which incorporates elements of country, blues, pop, big-band jazz and Latin rhythms. The state is also home to conjunto, which combines traditional Mexican music with polkas and other European forms. Texas has nurtured zydeco, the music of French-speaking Black people, which has increasingly incorporated elements of rhythm and blues.

So, it's time to take a road trip to uncover the rhythm of the Lone Star State.

THE HEART OF COUNTRY MUSIC MUSEUM

1701 S. Bridge St., Brady

Disc jockey Tracy Pitcox has been a huge fan of country music since he was in his teens, when he started "Hillbilly Hits" on KNEL, a radio show that continues today in Brady. From those humble beginnings has grown a museum honoring more than 125 country music artists, with memorabilia that includes Buck Owens' guitar, George Strait's hat and Nudie-designed rhinestone suits that Lefty Frizzell, George Jones, Ray Price and others wore.

The museum started in the radio station but soon outgrew that small space. It's now a 1,200-square-foot museum jam-packed with memorabilia that ranges from autographs to automobiles like Jim Reeves' tour bus, Pitcox says. Coming in second might be Tammy Wynette's limo or Ernest Tubb's Cadillac.

"Our guitar-shaped Webb Pierce mailbox does get a lot of attention, though, as do our extensive Hank Thompson, Loretta Lynn and Mel Tillis displays," Pitcox adds.

The 1,000-member Heart of Texas Country Music Association operates The Heart of Country Music Museum, and there has never been an admission charge. For more information go to www.hillbillyhits.com.

ROY ORBISON MUSEUM

213 Hendricks Blvd., Wink

Blink twice and you may miss it, but if you happen to be in Wink — or if you're a fan of Roy Orbison — a stop at the museum is a must. Just like the town, it's a small place,

© pasever / Adobe Stock

Museums honor the rich musical heritage of Texas, including, from left, the Heart of Texas Country Music Museum in Brady — it features a suit worn by Roy Rogers — the Buddy Holly Center in Lubbock and the Lefty Frizzell Country Museum in Corsicana.

but it carries a huge legacy for its hometown musician who put Wink on the map. Though Orbison wasn't born in Wink, he did spend several of his early years in town. Thus, the Roy Orbison Museum on East Hendricks Boulevard, a museum dedicated to the man who wrote songs that remain popular for all ages, including "Only the Lonely," "Dream Baby (How Long Must I Dream)" and "Oh, Pretty Woman."

The museum, which opened 20 years ago, is a one-room showplace of memorabilia that holds treasures from the time Orbison spent in Wink. One of the items that brings the biggest "WOW" factor is Orbison's dark glasses. According to museum volunteer Debora Carter, he wore the dark glasses for one show simply because he couldn't find his clear ones. "They just stuck," she says. "But people who visit the museum love to try them on and get their pictures taken."

The museum is also the caretaker of Orbison's first guitar. It lay forgotten in a storage locker for years. Upon its rediscovery, it went to the museum.

To find out more about the museum, go to its Facebook page.

BUDDY HOLLY CENTER

1801 Crickets Ave., Lubbock

Buddy Holly was only 22 when his life came to a tragic end as his plane crashed to the ground near Clear Lake, Iowa. But visitors to the Buddy Holly Center can get a glimpse into his life and the impact he made on music.

Before "the day the music died," Holly and his band, The Crickets, hit the charts with "That'll Be the Day," followed by "Peggy Sue" and more hits that reached the Top 10. In fact, he became the first musician to score a posthumous No. 1 hit with "It Doesn't Matter Anymore."

The museum, in the historic Fort Worth and Denver South Plains Railway Depot, is a testament to Holly's life. It features a gallery shaped like a guitar and serves to preserve and promote the legacy of Buddy Holly and the music of Lubbock and West Texas. Among the displays are items Holly crafted as a young man and artifacts from his musical career, as well as his famous eyeglasses and other exhibits from the tragic Feb. 3, 1959, airplane crash.

The center, which also houses the Texas Musician Hall of Fame and the Lubbock Fine Arts Gallery, features a wide array of programs encompassing music and music history. The restored home of Crickets drummer J.I. Allison, husband of Peggy Sue, was relocated to the Buddy Holly Center complex and is open for self-guided tours.

For more information, visit www.buddyhollycenter.org.

LEFTY FRIZZELL MUSEUM

912 West Park Ave., Corsicana

Merle Haggard once said William Orville "Lefty" Frizzell was "the most unique thing that ever happened to country music." Following that statement were accolades from other greats, including George Jones, Roy Orbison, George Strait and more. Now visitors to the museum named in his honor can see what the fuss was all about.

Frizzell, the son of an oil worker, was born in Corsicana and knew from a young age that he didn't want to follow in his dad's footsteps. Rather, he chose to step onstage and play his guitar, eventually becoming a country music sensation with "If You've Got the Money, I've Got the Time" and "I Love You a Thousand Ways," among other chart-topping tunes. In the early 1950s, Frizzell had four songs in the Top 10 at the same time.

The Lefty Frizzell Museum is in Corsicana's Pioneer Village, made up of buildings that represent the pioneer era. The museum is home to many of Frizzell's personal items, including some of his gold records, photos, costumes and other mementos from his years on the road in the 1950s. Frizzell died young at age 47, but his legacy lives on in Corsicana. For more information, visit Pioneer Village's Facebook page.

Other genres and artists

Museums dedicated to the music and musicians of Texas are scattered across the state. Here are several of note:

- ★The Freddy Fender Museum, 210 E. Heywood St., San Benito. It's also home to the Texas Conjunto Music Museum Hall of Fame. www.cityofsanbenito.com
- ★The Sherman Jazz Museum, 201 E. Lamar St., Sherman. www.shermanjazzmuseum.com
- ★Texas Polka Museum, 712 Lyons Ave., Schulenberg. www.texaspolkamuseum.com
- ★Tex Ritter Museum at the Texas Country Music Hall of Fame, 310 W. Panola St., Carthage. www.tcmhof.com

Celebrating Women of Eastex

Women play a vital role at Eastex

Story by ANDREA AGARDY

In honor of International Women's Day — observed annually on March 8 — Eastex celebrates the invaluable contributions of *all* the women on our staff. Here's a closer look at six of the women whose efforts help make Eastex a success:

Jessica Esparza

Jessica Esparza has only worked as a cashier at Eastex's Henderson office for a year, but she's already making a difference. She's bilingual, and her Spanish fluency provides a vital link to customers who struggled in the past to get the help they need.

"A lady came in recently with questions she had never asked because she couldn't make herself understood," Jessica says. "She said, 'Oh, I'm so glad you're here now. I'm going to look for you when I have questions!'"

With almost 20 years of customer service experience, Jessica enjoys working at Eastex. "I look forward to staying here," she says. "My younger co-worker said to me, 'Do you realize that we're going to work here for the rest of our lives together?' Hopefully, that's the plan."

Jessica lives in Henderson with her cat and dog, and she enjoys spending time with loved ones. She's also studying to earn a degree in business administration.

Yolanda Harrell

When Yolanda Harrell unexpectedly lost her job at a restaurant, a friend working at Eastex suggested she apply for a job there. Today — 38 years later — Yolanda still works at Eastex's Livingston office as a customer service representative.

"It's a dream job to work for Eastex," she says. "It's just a blessing to be able to work for a good company, one that takes care of their employees."

Yolanda brings empathy to every customer interaction. "The first thing is to be compassionate with the customers and listen to their stories," she says. "I'm a people person, I've come to know a lot of the customers personally over the years."

Yolanda and her husband, Ricky, have two children. When she's not deer hunting with Ricky or volunteering with youths at First Community Baptist Church, she enjoys her annual girls trip with a group of high school classmates. She's got her sights set on a visit to Dubai.

Malinda Jones

Malinda Jones isn't one to sit around waiting for something to do. While her responsibilities have increased exponentially in her decades at Eastex, she still finds time to do "the little things," like making coffee in the break room and the occasional supply run. "I absolutely love my job and I am very grateful to be part of the Eastex Telephone family," she says.

Malinda started at Eastex 39 years ago as then-general manager Allen "Knot" Dorman's secretary, and she's stayed busy every day since. Today, she's business operations manager, with a diverse portfolio of duties ranging from payroll and benefits to keeping company records. "I make sure that different departments in the office are assisting our customers at their very best," she says.

Malinda and her husband, Gary, have two daughters. Gary is enjoying a long career in baseball, and for 2022, will be the first base coach for the Detroit Tigers. Malinda loves traveling to Gary's games.

Debbie Middleton

The technology Debbie Middleton helps customers with today didn't exist when she began working at Eastex. "The internet wasn't a thing in 1982," she laughs.

Debbie, who's always been technology-minded, enjoys working in technical support. "I actually went to school for computer science when women didn't go to school for computer science, in the '70s and early '80s," she says. "That was just a very interesting thing to me."

Whether she's helping an installation crew diagnose an issue or on a trouble-shooting call with a customer, Debbie's a professional problem solver. "It's hard to describe what the job is, because it's never the same," she says. "You don't get bored with it. I like figuring things out and it's a lot of that. That's what keeps it interesting."

Off the clock, Debbie enjoys traveling and serving on the board of the Rusk Panola Children's Advocacy Center. She and her husband, Gary, have two sons and four grandchildren.

Michelle Spence

A lifelong resident of Waskom, customer service representative Michelle Spence loves that her job is helping her neighbors. "When I'm speaking to a customer I always think, 'If this was my mom or dad, how would I want someone to speak to them, how would I want someone to handle it?'" she says. "I've known a lot of these customers for my entire life."

In her 20 years at Eastex, Michelle has seen many changes, especially in technology. But one constant has been the sense of family she feels at Eastex. "I've never worked for a company like this," she says. "They value their employees and our families. That means a lot, to love what you do. I know that when I go to work I'm going to enjoy being there."

Michelle's passions include reading and cooking for her friends and family. She and her husband, Wayne, have three children and five grandchildren.

Cindy Vailes

Cindy Vailes started working at Eastex 44 years ago and has no plans on retiring. "I'm not in a hurry to leave," she says. "I've been on vacation long enough to where I was really ready to come back. I didn't think I could stand to stay at the house another day! You miss being in the know and you miss the people. It's like another home."

A customer service representative in the Livingston office, the connections she's formed with co-workers play a big part in why Cindy loves going into the office every morning. "I'm very comfortable," she says. "The comfort comes from the relationships we have. We've had a lot of personal conversations, we've been through divorces, illnesses, everything that a family goes through. There's just a lot of support. It's definitely another family."

When she's not at work, Cindy enjoys spending time with her original family, including her husband, Donald, two children and six grandchildren.

HIT the TRAIL

These apps can help you plan your next outdoor adventure

Looking for new adventures this spring? A good internet connection can come in handy when you're planning your next excursion into the great outdoors. From discovering your next destination to sharing every step of the journey, these digital tools make it easier than ever to get out there and start enjoying our world.

Yonder

Yonder helps people find nature-rich destinations off the beaten path. Search the more than 20,000 locations across the United States to find your new favorite hidden gem. Each listing puts just as much focus on the experiences guests can expect during their stay as it does on the price tag. Those experiences can include trekking through a canyon, sampling grapes off the vine or enjoying nearby views. Travelers can book online or in the Yonder app available for iOS and Android.

Tripcast

Share more than just the highlights of your trip with the people who matter most. With Tripcast, available on iOS and Android, you can add friends and family to an interactive photo album that puts every traveler's pics in one place. Post notes, photos and real-time updates that are all automatically added to a trip map. Make your trip public or only invite those who want to share in every step of the journey.

AllTrails

You might be surprised how many great trails there are right in your own community, and AllTrails can help uncover them all. Whether you're looking for a relaxing hike, an invigorating trail run or a challenging, off-road bike ride, you're bound to find something that fits your needs. Browse nearby trails based on their length, difficulty and popularity to find exactly what you're looking for. You can even search for trails that are dog-friendly, have great views or are suited to a fun family outing. You can download the app in iOS or Android.

Star Walk

Make a night under the stars even more exciting with this augmented-reality star chart that tracks over 200,000 celestial objects. Open the app and point your phone at the night sky to see constellations traced right before your eyes and learn about the mythology behind them. Track planets or the International Space Station, and even get notifications for major astronomical events on iOS and Android devices.

Recreation.gov

For those seeking an extended stay in the wild, Recreation.gov is a great starting point. The site and its official app are both built to help travelers find and reserve campsites at national parks, forests and other federally designated properties across the country. Browse amenities and nearby activities for each site, as well as ratings and reviews from those who have stayed there.

Find your Little Free Library

An online map guides readers to book boxes

Take a book. Leave a book. That's the simple, powerful idea behind more than 100,000 Little Free Libraries scattered across the globe.

Todd H. Bol, who created the first Little Free Library in 2009, founded a nonprofit of that name to help people access books at no cost, no matter where they live. A key goal of the Little Free Library organization is the promotion of literacy.

The effort is driven by volunteers who build small, waterproof library boxes, find the libraries a home in their yards or other appropriate spots, and seed them with books. You don't have to share a book before taking one, and you don't even need to return the book you take. It's all on the honor system. But, please do consider contributing a book or two, because that's how the library system grows.

Do you want to find a Little Free Library near you?
For a searchable map, visit littlefreelibrary.org/ourmap.

E-READERS

Are you the type of avid reader who enjoys keeping a couple, or maybe even a couple dozen, reading options handy at all times? E-readers were made for you.

E-readers' screens are more eye-friendly than those of do-everything tablets like iPads. And there's another key advantage to e-readers — fewer distractions. There are no notifications, social media, games or email.

While the screens of phones and tablets emit light to create bright, clear images, those of e-readers, such as the Kindle, direct light toward the screen instead of sending it outward. Eye strain is lessened, and the e-readers typically are easy to view even when in direct sunlight.

Amazon remains the e-reader leader. The company is on the 11th version of the Kindle Paperwhite, which was updated late last year. The price is about $140, with slightly more expensive and less pricey versions also available.

With a Kindle, you can tap into the Amazon library to purchase and store online books. While companies such as Apple offer bookstores, those are not available on Kindle devices.

There are also non-Kindle e-readers, like the Clara HD by Kobo. The company has its own e-book store. You can't reach the Amazon bookstore through a Kobo device, but you can get books through software such as OverDrive, which is used by many library systems. A Clara HD is available for about $118 from online sites such as Walmart.

Bonus tip: Do you ever want to read the classics, for free? Project Gutenberg makes it possible, providing digital versions of books whose copyrights status allows free distribution. Visit gutenberg.org for details and to browse the library.

Now is the time to decompress

April is National Stress Awareness Month

Story By ANDREA AGARDY

Every day, licensed massage therapist Jennifer Wall sees what stress does to the body. As the owner of Wall's Wellness Massage & Spa in Livingston, she provides relief to people under pressure.

"Stress is everywhere. It's all over you, not just in your shoulders or wherever," she says. "A person who's highly stressed, anywhere you touch you're going to have tender spots, because when you're stressed you naturally tense everything up."

With a little attention and practice, stress can be managed, which is good news since stressors aren't going anywhere anytime soon. Whether it's financial woes, family issues, work deadlines or worries about our ever-changing world, most people cope with pressure. Add in little everyday annoyances, like long checkout lines, and we all could use a break.

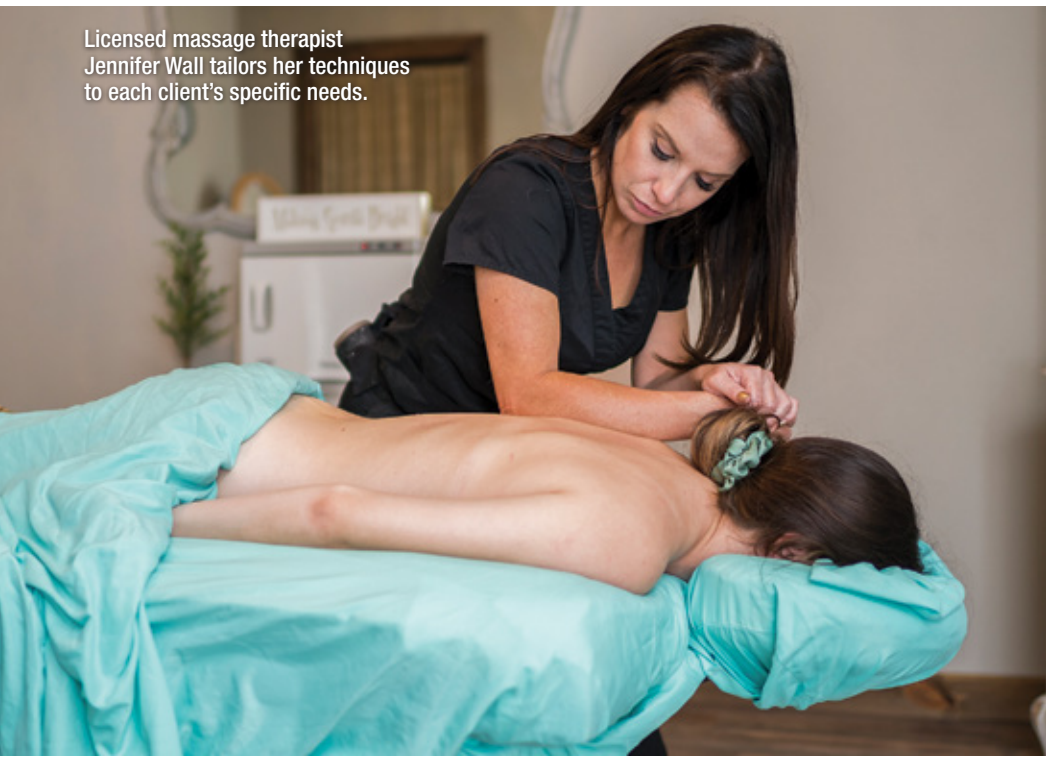
While many folks just push on through the tough times, be wary of putting off self-care for too long. Stress isn't just in our minds, it impacts our health, too.

WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress isn't always a bad thing. That fight-or-flight response is how our bodies prepare us to conquer challenges. However, when stress responses continue for extended periods of time, there are physical, emotional and behavioral consequences.

Physical symptoms include headaches, high blood pressure, insomnia, digestive problems and a weakened immune system. Chronic stress can cause anxiety, irritability, depression and panic attacks. Some try to manage the emotional impact with unhealthy behaviors like drug and alcohol abuse, overeating and compulsive shopping — opening the door to a new slate of problems.

Experts on the subject, such as those at the Mayo Clinic, recommend managing stress by exercising and eating healthy. Spending time with friends and family is also helpful, as is taking time to enjoy hobbies and practicing relaxation techniques like meditation, yoga and massage.



Licensed massage therapist Jennifer Wall tailors her techniques to each client's specific needs.

THE POWER OF TOUCH

About half of Jennifer's clients come to see her specifically for relaxation. She tailors her treatments to each client's specific needs. She recommends first-timers opt for a Swedish massage rather than a deep tissue treatment. "It's a lighter technique that helps the body relax and wind down, while also increasing blood flow," she says.

Good communication between a massage therapist and a client is crucial. Jennifer has a three-session rule. "You want someone who cares about what you're going through and tries to fix the problem," she says. "If my client is not responding as expected within three sessions, then I find it important that I let them know and even help guide them to the level of care or specialty that would benefit them the most."

Jennifer focuses on providing relief, and she avoids mentioning what's stressing a client out. "That's your time to unwind and not think about all the things going on around you," she says. "Sometimes that 30 to 90 minutes is the only time people actually get to lay down where there's no interruption, so the body just naturally goes into relaxation mode. That's my goal, I want them to relax as much as they can."

Wall's Wellness Massage & Spa

511 W. Polk St., Livingston | 936-6888-2539
For more information, including details on the latest specials, check out the spa's Facebook page.

Children under pressure

Teaching kids to manage stress has lifelong benefits

Story By ANDREA AGARDY

Even if they don't understand or can't verbalize what they're experiencing, kids feel the pressure. "Young kids might not know what's going on, they just know something feels off. They don't have a name for it," says Julie Puckett, a guidance counselor in the Leggett Independent School District.

In addition to the pressures children have always endured, today's kids must navigate stressors that simply didn't exist when their parents were their age. By developing coping skills at an early age, they can build a toolkit useful for the rest of their lives.

If left unaddressed, long-term stress can have serious health implications. According to the American Psychiatric Association, stress can contribute to physical health problems like high blood pressure, obesity, a weakened immune system and heart disease.

There are mental health impacts as well. A 2018 study, using data compiled by the National Survey of Mental Health, found that diagnoses of anxiety and depression in children ages 6 to 17 are on the rise — increasing from 5.4% in 2003 to 8.4% in 2011-12. The study determined that more than 1 in 20 American children lives with anxiety or depression, both of which can be caused or exacerbated by unchecked stress.

LEARNING TO COPE

Kids encounter stress everywhere— at home, at school, with their peers and even online. Parents can help their kids manage stress by teaching and demonstrating coping strategies, and reinforcing those lessons regularly.

Puckett recommends starting with a checkup by the family doctor to rule out medical issues. Once that's done, set boundaries and practice moderation. "Not every child needs a television in their room," Puckett says. "Not every child needs a phone at the age of 6."

It's important parents keep their cool when a stressed child starts acting out. "Once you start the yelling, you've lost," Puckett says. "Paying attention and having that kind of relationship is so important, it just makes a world of difference."

The APA also recommends prioritizing sleep and exercise, talking out troubling situations with trusted adults, spending time outdoors and practicing self-care by spending time just doing the little things that bring joy.

Giving children an outlet for their feelings and some structure — karate classes, for example — also helps. "The busier your child is, within reason, the better," Puckett says. "Those kids do so much better than the kids who have idle time on their hands."

Guidance counselor Julie Puckett says parents play vital roles in how their children cope with stress.

Signs of a child struggling with stress

Irritability and anger: Kids, especially young children, might not have the vocabulary to describe how they're feeling. That can result in a short-tempered and argumentative kid.

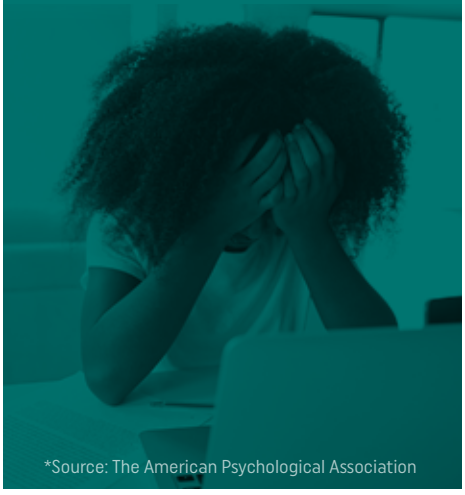
Behavioral changes: Sudden changes in behavior can indicate high stress levels.

Trouble sleeping: A stressed-out child might complain of being tired all the time, sleep longer than usual or have trouble falling asleep.

Neglecting responsibilities: Suddenly forgetting assignments and obligations or procrastinating more often can be a reaction to stress.

Eating changes: Eating too much or not enough can both be responses to stress.

Getting sick: Stress has physical symptoms, too. Children can struggle with headaches, stomachaches and may even spend a lot of time in the school nurse's office.



*Source: The American Psychological Association

Roasting can yield the perfect taste and texture

Explore the nuances of a common cooking technique

A perfectly roasted cut of beef is a thing of beauty. A deliciously roasted chicken surrounded by colorful roasted vegetables is Instagram worthy. But how do you get these cuts of meat to reach these levels of perfection?

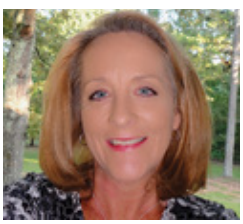
Roasting is an age-old culinary technique that takes relatively tough cuts of meat and, like magic, turns them into tender, mouthwatering bites. It all has to do with cooking low and slow. There's a marked difference between roasting and baking. Baking transforms liquid — batter — into solids like cakes and cookies. Roasting does the opposite, taking meats and vegetables and breaking down their sinewy fibers into a near-gelatinous state.

Here are some simple tips to consider when roasting.

Bring food to room temperature before roasting: Tempering food is a simple but critical step that involves bringing an ingredient to room temperature so that it cooks more evenly. When roasting whole chickens, turkeys, Cornish hens and other birds, keep in mind that white and dark meat are best cooked to different temperatures.

To ensure your bird is roasting properly, position different parts toward hotter or cooler parts of the oven, or cover the breast with foil. It's important to rest meat after roasting, particularly larger cuts that continue to cook after you take them out of the oven. Letting the meat rest for 10 to 20 minutes is usually sufficient. Rested meat will cut more easily.

Remember that size matters: When roasting vegetables, cut veggies into pieces of the same size to ensure even cooking. The best meats to roast are large, tough cuts, such as pork shoulder. Don't roast thinner, less fatty cuts of meat such as boneless, skinless chicken breasts — they'll dry out. Good vegetables to roast are the heartier ones like beets, carrots, potatoes, squashes, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts and sweet potatoes.



FOOD EDITOR **ANNE P. BRALY** IS A NATIVE OF CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE.

PERFECTLY ROASTED RIB-EYE

- 1 (4- to 5-pound) rib-eye roast
- Olive oil, optional
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt
- 1-2 teaspoons black pepper, crushed or ground

Before roasting, bring the meat to room temperature. Preheat the oven to 325 F. If the roast is very lean, you may want to drizzle 1 to 2 tablespoons of olive oil over it. Sprinkle salt and pepper over the roast, then place it on a wire rack on a baking sheet. Keep in mind that your cooking time depends on the size of your roast.

Bake for approximately 25 to 30 minutes for every pound of meat for the roast to be cooked to medium. Adjust accordingly for your preferred level of doneness.

You should use a meat thermometer to determine when the roast is done. Push the thermometer all the way into the center of the roast. The ideal temperature for medium is 140-145 F, and the meat may become tough if cooked to well done, which is 155 F and above. Remove the meat from the oven when the inside temperature is about 10 degrees less than your desired level of doneness, because it will continue to cook as it rests.

Let the roast rest for at least 15 minutes, tented in aluminum foil to keep it warm, before carving to serve. Makes about 10 servings.

GARLIC BUTTER ROASTED CHICKEN

- 1 (4-pound) whole chicken, at room temperature, giblets and neck removed from cavity
- 1/4 cup unsalted butter, melted
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 1 lemon, halved
- Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons fresh chopped parsley
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 whole head of garlic, roughly peeled and cut in half horizontally through the middle crosswise
- 3 fresh whole rosemary sprigs

Preheat the oven to 425 F. Line a baking tray with foil, or lightly grease a roasting pan. Pat the chicken dry with paper towels.

Pour the melted butter, olive oil, wine and juice squeezed from one of the lemon halves over the chicken, under the skin and inside the cavity. Season the chicken liberally with salt and pepper on the outside and inside the cavity, then sprinkle the parsley over it. Rub the minced garlic over the chicken, mixing all the ingredients together over the chicken and under the skin.

Stuff the garlic head into the chicken cavity, along with the rosemary sprigs and the squeezed lemon half. Tie the legs together with kitchen string. Place the chicken, breast-side up, onto a baking sheet or roasting pan and roast for 1 hour and 15-20 minutes, basting halfway through cooking time, until its juices run clear when you pierce the chicken thigh with a skewer.

Baste again, then turn on the broiler to high and broil the bird for 2-3 minutes or until the skin is crisp and golden. Keep an eye on this process, because it can burn quickly.

Remove the chicken from the oven, cover it with foil and allow it to rest for 10 minutes before serving. Drizzle it with the pan juices, and serve it with the remaining lemon half cut into wedges or slices.

Roasted Vegetable Medley

- 3 zucchini squash, cut lengthwise into fourths, then sliced into bite-sized pieces
- 3 yellow squash, cut lengthwise into fourths, then sliced into bite-sized pieces
- 1 red bell pepper, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 red onion, cut into wedges
- 8 ounces whole mushrooms
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar, or more to taste
- 1 tablespoon rosemary leaves
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt

Preheat the oven to 450 F. Spray a large baking sheet with cooking spray.

Mix all of the cut-up vegetables and garlic in a large bowl. Add olive oil and balsamic vinegar. Toss until all the vegetables are covered. Add rosemary leaves and salt, and toss again.

Roast the vegetables for 30-40 minutes, stirring once, until they are brown on the outside edges and tender on the inside. Makes 6-8 servings.

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