Burton is a great place to be with lots of happenings this month, especially the Texas Ranger Days and Big Star Texas Night. Also read about the Film Friendly Lunch & Learn in Giddings, interesting history on Mineral Wells and Madisonville and Thunder on the Colorado biker rally in Smithville.

BACKROADS Newsletter
Exploring Texas with the Rural Texas Center
March 2013 Volume 18

Greetings Friends & Partners!

March is fluffy and pastel with the events of Easter. Or maybe it's the vibrant red, white and blue of Texas Independence. It's definitely black leather and asphalt at Thunder on the Colorado biker rally in Smithville. There's some really great things in Texas for March. You'll find Burton Texas Ranger Days and Big Star Texas Night, complete with gun-slinging re-enactments, fajita and bean cookoff and a Railroad Street dance that night.

Be sure to read more about our newer members in articles about the founding of Mineral Wells and an introduction to Madisonville. Blanco has gone mobile with its new application Go Blanco and (snakes alive!) check out the upcoming Nature Festival in Rockdale where you can learn about the snakes of Milam County. Thankfully it hasn't thundered here yet, so I hope the little critters are still asleep. (You know the first thunder in March wakes the snakes. Eep.)

--See you on the trail

EVENTS CALENDAR FOR March
Click to download our Calendar PDF

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Rural Texas Tourism Center
289 West Railroad
Giddings, TX 78942

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Sunset on the Blanco River

Go Blanco Launches Smart Phone Application on March 1

Tell your friends, post it to Facebook, sign up your business. The Go Blanco App will give all of our visitors quick information on where to Stay, Eat and Play while they are here - a "locals" tab will also provide a complete listing of all of our Blanco business members - a phone book, just for Blanco, right in the palm of your hand. Please call the Chamber Office for more information: 830-833-5101.

Lights, Camera, Community!
Giddings Hosts a Lunch & Learn Focusing on Film Friendly Communities and Texas Independent Films

On Monday, March 25, the Rural Texas Center in Giddings is thrilled to be hosting a Lunch & Learn featuring guest speakers Adena Lewis, Planning & Project Management Tourism Coordinator for Bastrop County and Ryan Long with The Austin Film Society and the Texas Independent Film Network.

Adena was previously the executive director for the Smithville Chamber of Commerce and has been instrumental in bringing the filming of many movies to Smithville, the first Film Friendly Texas Community. Ryan attended the UT Austin for his Radio-Television-Film degree and after many projects in Los Angeles and New York City he settled back in Austin for good and started Screen Door Film, Austin's premiere micro-cinema. Ryan is also a co-founder of The Texas Independent Film Network, an organization that takes a different Texas independent film on statewide tour each month. Ryan joined AFS in November 2010 as Manager, Programs & Operations where he manages a number of different film programming initiatives, as well as the day to day management of Austin Studios.

The presentation will be from 11am-1pm at the Giddings Public Library and Cultural Center at 276 N. Orange St. The Lunch & Learn is open to anyone who is interested in learning about experiences in movie filming in rural Texas communities and Texas-made independent films. Registration is required. If you would like more information, please feel free to call the Giddings Chamber of Commerce at 979-542-3455 or visit the events page on their website: www.GiddingsTX.com.

Thunder on the Colorado
Biker Rally in Smithville

FRI March 15th - SUN March 17th (the third Weekend in March)

Live Music - Texas Hold ’Em Poker Tournament - limited players Fun Run Ride thru State Parks - Miss
Thunder Crowning - prize
Parade Through Downtown Smithville - Bike Show - prizes
Friday Night Lights - Biker Games - prizes
Camping available - Sponsorships available
T-shirts, pins, patches, koozies
Vendors & More!

Save the date for the 56th annual Jamboree
Smithville Texas style

Wednesday, April 10th thru Sunday, April 14th, 2013

There will be lots of Fun and Games at Jamboree, including carnival rides and games for all ages. Enjoy Live Music for dancing or listening, and with the covered dance floor the show will go on come rain or shine.

Music by Johnny Lee and the Urban Cowboy Band is great to hold your sweetheart (or to find a new one!) Other musicians include Clayton Adams Band, Dwayne Dopsie and the Hellraisers, Jason Boland and the Stragglers, Kenny Ortiz and the No Chance Band. And what party would be complete without good food and drinks?

You’ll see TOURNAMENTS of skill and cunning such as: HORSE SHOES - WASHERS - SOFTBALL - VOLLEYBALL. Thrill with the crowd to the colorful parade down historic Main Street. At the Pet show everyone realizes that there's nothing cuter than kids and their pets. Then mosey over to the 4H/FFA Livestock Show and Sale to help the students who raise these animals. We’ll see you at Jamboree! The Critter says "Y'all Come!"

LOCATION: Riverbend Park, located on Hwy 71 west of the Colorado River, Smithville, Texas

The Founding of Mineral Wells

In 1877, James Alvis Lynch, his family, and 50 head of livestock left Denison, Texas, and headed west for a drier climate in hopes of it serving as a relief from malaria. Both James Lynch and his wife, Armanda, suffered from rheumatism. When the family got news of Comanche attacks further west, they decided to settle...
down where they were, in a valley tucked among the hills of Palo Pinto County.

Although the location the Lynch family decided to settle in was quite beautiful, it was four miles from the only water source, the Brazos River. By the summer of 1880, a well driller named Providence agreed to drill a well in exchange for some of the Lynch family's oxen. At first, the water's funny taste worried the family, so they watered their livestock with it to test its safety. Soon after the family began to drink from the well, they found they were feeling better.

News of the "healing" waters spread quickly. Neighbors began trying the water, and within a month strangers were showing up on the Lynch property, asking about the water. Almost immediately people were coming by the thousands to try this magical drink. Lynch's well produced just 100 gallons per day, so he was forced to have guests sign a declaration affirming that they were sick and in need of the water. With the popularity of the water spreading, the town of Mineral Wells was laid out in the fall of 1881, with Mr. Lynch naming himself the first mayor.

Madisonville: The Mushroom Capital of Texas

For those who enjoy small town ambience but still crave the convenience and culture of a larger city, Madisonville is ideal. A small community of less than 5,000 people, they are often called the "Gateway to Bryan/College Station", (they are only 35 minutes away and the home of Texas A&M University.) About halfway between Houston and Dallas, Madisonville is within 3 hours of more than 16 million people. The cities of Houston, Dallas/Ft. Worth, Austin, and San Antonio are all within 200 miles.

Whether you are enjoying the amenities at Lake Madison, playing golf at the Oak Ridge Country Club, or dining in the historic Woodbine Hotel, you're sure to find a warm welcome. Did you know that Madisonville, Texas was named "Mushroom Capitol of Texas" by the Texas state legislature? Every year the popularity of the Texas Mushroom Festival grows.
Friday and Saturday, April 12 - 13, at the Rockdale Fair Park. This family oriented event is for nature lovers of all ages. Our theme for this year's festival is "Snakes of Milam County" and we'll have several speakers and exhibitors on this topic. Other speakers will be on topics such as: feral hogs; wildlife habitat improvement through prescribed fire and vegetation management; wildflowers and plant identification; and the bryophytes, mosses and liverworts.

Commander Ben (Ben Shrader) will be a special attraction at the festival this year. Commander Ben, the Invasive Species Hunter, will bring his Invasive Hunter Academy Program for the educational enjoyment of children and adults alike. Come hear what this amazing middle schooler has today.

Numerous additional nature venues and exhibits will be ongoing throughout the day. This would include subject areas such as: animal tracks; archaeological dig; bats; butterflies; the horned lizard; pollinators; native grasses; the Houston toad; angling education; bee keeping; Texas crawdads and of course the always popular face painting. Friday evening will feature a special outdoor activity, followed by an outstanding National Geographic film, "Endangered Species: Don't Say Goodbye" on a large screen.

We will be having a Nature Photo Contest again, and for details on this and the festival see our webpage: http://txmn.org/elcamino/naturefest/.

33rd Annual Oysterfest in Fulton

Each year the Fulton Volunteer Fire Department and the Town of Fulton sponsor Oysterfest, a salute to the tasty bi-valve found in our local waters. Oysterfest features carnival rides, games, food, an oyster eating contest, live music, unique vendor booths and most of all Oysterfest officials work with seafood sources along the Texas Gulf Coast to locate the freshest oysters and other seafood as well as teh most popular entertainment. For the past 30 years, the Fulton Volunteer Fire Department have used proceeds from the festival to purchase life saving and fire fighting equipment. Proceeds from this year's festival will be used to update current equipment, purchase additional protective gear and add to the building fund for the proposed new Fire Station. Oysterfest proceeds are the major source of funding for fire protection equipment in the community.

Preparations are once again underway for the 33rd Annual Fulton Oysterfest, sponsored by the Fulton Volunteer Fire Department. Held on the waterfront in Fulton, Oysterfest is a family friendly event with carnival rides and great musical entertainment. We look forward to it being larger than the 2010 event; with over 35,000 visitors, it was the most successful in Oysterfest history.

Crawfish and Cowboys Music Festival on March 22-23 at the Waterfront Lodge & Marina. Crawfish and Cowboys Music Festivals are music festivals with a Crawfish twist held in a number of regional areas in Texas each year. Always featured is music and food from local music acts and featured entertainers. Festival events promise to be a fun filled day that offers music, great food and activities to all who attend!

Head on over to Onalaska for the Crawfish and Cowboys Music Festival on March 22-23 at the Waterfront Lodge & Marina. Crawfish and Cowboys Music Festivals are music festivals with a Crawfish twist held in a number of regional areas in Texas each year. Always featured is music and food from local music acts and featured entertainers. Festival events promise to be a fun filled day that offers music, great food and activities to all who attend!

The City of Cuero Easter Annual Egg Hunt & Party on March 30 will be a day filled with fun family events. Kids can participate in all sorts of games including musical chairs and the bunny hop! Bring your Easter Baskets to Cuero Municipal Park for the big Easter Egg Hunt!
Texans Celebrate 177 Years of Independence in Brenham

On March 2-3 Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site marked the 177th anniversary of Texas independence with a free 2-day festival. Independence Hall at Washington-on-the-Brazos is the site where representatives of the people of Texas met to decide their fate and our future. On March 2, 1836, delegates to the Convention listened to George Childress enumerate their grievances against the government of Mexico, as well as the tyrannical rule of Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna.

Fifty-nine delegates embroiled in a revolution faced an uncertain future when they met to declare Texas a free and independent Republic and created a constitution for the fledgling nation. To honor their sacrifice and dedication, a special commemorative ceremony will open and close each day of festivities.

Craig Toungate presented “In the Shadow of Giants,” a one-man show with original music. The show followed the exploits of Meredith Toungate, Craig’s great-grandfather, and Robert Hancock Hunter through the events of the Texas Revolution.

The Star of the Republic Museum’s new exhibit, “The Substance of Life: Texas through the Eyes of Theodore Gentilz,” began March 2 and continues through May 31, 2013. Gentilz, a Frenchman, came to Texas in 1844 as a surveyor for empresario Henri Castro and helped plat the town of Castroville. He later moved to San Antonio where his art focused on the everyday life of the indigenous cultures, including Indians, Mexican ranchers and villagers. The exhibit includes 16 oil paintings dating from the mid-19th century. For more information, call 936-878-2214 or visit www.birthplaceoftexas.com.