

www.texasyes.org

# Texas Yes!

Texas Department of Agriculture

May 2006

## SPECIAL FOCUS:

# Festivals, Fairs and Fun for All

From Susan Combs, Commissioner



- Keep it concise to make each word count.
- Avoid jargon and unrecognized acronyms.
- Be creative in your headline, but stick to the facts and avoid fluff in the body copy.

### HOOK, LINE AND SINKER

- Consider adding a press pass, event t-shirt, coffee mug or other small event prize item to help reel in your catch (in this case, the editor's good will). If you know the editor personally, include a handwritten note with the release.

For our full article on preparing press releases and media kits, go to [www.TexasYes.org](http://www.TexasYes.org), and click on Member's Corner. While you're there, order a copy of our Resources for a Texas Yes! Event Starter Kit. For more fishing tips, check with the folks at Texas Parks and Wildlife.

Wildflowers grow where others dare not. Bluebonnets herald the arrival of spring and another homegrown tradition -- small town fairs and festivals. From the Spring Wildflower Trail Ride in Junction to Mesquite Daze in Anson and the Cinco de Mayo Celebration in Sonora, tourism events are springing up year 'round across rural Texas. And like wildflowers, some of the most creative events are growing in some of the most unexpected places.



## Writing a Release:

### There's More Than One Way to Skin a Catfish!

When event promotion budgets are tight (when are they not?), attracting free publicity is even more critical to capture attention. A press release is the standard tool to communicate information to the media. Just like fishing, you have to select the right bait, think about presentation, and then set the hook. Here are a few tips from our seasoned guides:

#### PRESENTATION

- Press releases should run about 300-800 words (one to two pages) and be printed on official (city/county/organization) letterhead.
- Include contact information (your name, phone number and e-mail address). The editor may have questions or may wish to interview you or others for a longer feature article.

#### BAIT

- Now, here's the challenge: you have just three seconds to grab the editor's attention. (If you are reading this article, perhaps the headline helped?) Create a catchy headline using no more than 80 characters. Use title case in the headline only (capitalizing every word except for prepositions and articles of three characters or less).

#### SET THE HOOK

- Write just like your 6th grade English teacher taught you -- in an inverted pyramid. The lead paragraph includes the 5 Ws: The who, what, when, where, why and how of the story.
- The rest of the release expands on the information in the lead paragraph and includes details of lesser importance. Remember who your audience is and think about what would interest them.

#### CATCH AND RELEASE

### TACKLE BOX BASICS: The 5 Ws

- Who:** host community, sponsoring organization
- What:** event name
- Where:** event location
- When:** event dates
- Why:** to celebrate, to preserve, to raise funds, etc.
- How:** how can people get more information, reserve a booth, volunteer or purchase tickets

## GOT GOAT?

No foolin' in Eldorado. An event spoofing the Alaskan Iditarod Dog Race in the middle of goat country, the fourth annual Elgoatarod held April 1-2, featured goat races, goat kissing, goat pill flipping, a "Goat Fries" cook-off, arts and crafts, food and a midway. With a mighty big sense of humor, Eldorado is a self-described "one-stoplight town" of about 1,800 people 45 miles south of San Angelo. [www.eldoradotx.com](http://www.eldoradotx.com).

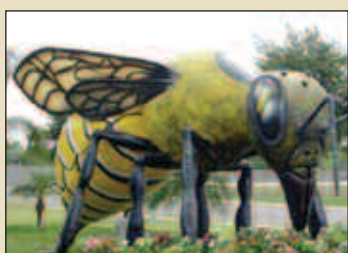
**Breaking records in Goldwaithe.** Mills County hosted its ninth Annual BBQ Goat Cook-off in April with a Wild West re-enactment, dress-the-goat contest, 5K run and car show. The biggest goat cook-off yet is expected to break all records for attendance as tourism continues to grow in this scenic Hill Country town at the intersection of highways 183 and 16, just 100 miles northwest of Austin. [www.goldthwaite.biz](http://www.goldthwaite.biz).

## Beating the Buzz

Newspaper headlines announced to the world with no lack of sensationalism that the Africanized honey bee, also known as the "killer bee," had invaded the United States and made its first appearance in the small town of Hidalgo, six miles south of McAllen across the Rio Grande from Reynosa, Mexico. The negative buzz was surely a challenge for this tourism destination and bird-watchers' paradise. But within months the citizens of Hidalgo commissioned, sculpted and proudly displayed a 10 foot tall, 2,000 pound, full-color statue of the feared "killer bee." Hidalgo took the sting out of negative press with a touch of Texas humor.

This March, Hidalgo celebrated its 30th annual BorderFest, the oldest cultural, heritage and

musical festival in South Texas. Started in 1977 by the chamber of commerce, the inaugural event was a small community festival lasting one day and drawing some 500 people. The festival committee grew into a 501c3 nonprofit association. Now more than 1,000 volunteers work to produce the event -- a nationally recognized heritage and music festival attracting major sponsors and more than 65,000 people over five days with headliners like Brad Paisley and Juan Gabriel. Annually, the festival donates an average of \$10,000 to \$20,000 in scholarships to area youth. [www.hidalgotexas.com](http://www.hidalgotexas.com)



## MAKE YOURS AN EVENT TO REMEMBER:

### Kick it Up in Kemah

Whether you're a seasoned pro or a spring lamb, the latest in the series of Texas Yes! rural tourism workshops has all the ingredients to help make yours an event to remember. The smorgasbord of topics includes event planning, budgeting, sponsorships, minimizing risk, measuring success and investing returns. Attend one day-long session or both, May 15-16, 2006, in Kemah, just 20 miles from downtown Houston. Sample this Texas tourism destination on Galveston Bay and take advantage of all the Texas Yes! networking opportunities while learning how to spice up tourism in your rural community. Let's kick it up a notch in Kemah! (Bam!) For more details on the Bootstrap Marketing Workshop Series III, go to [www.TexasYes.org](http://www.TexasYes.org).

## Five Tips for Tracking Success

How did we do? How many visitors did we attract? What does that mean in terms of new revenues? Should we do this again next year?

Gate receipts, vendor sales and occupancy rates can provide quantitative data to answer those questions, but how do you measure how much fun your visitors had or how likely they are to come to your community again? A quick and inexpensive method to gather qualitative data is to conduct opinion surveys during the event. Some tips:

1. **Keep it short** – You don't want to create a long survey that takes your participant away from all the fun.
2. **Keep it simple** – Use plain, easy-to-understand language that is direct and to the point.
3. **Identify your objective** – Know ahead of time what you plan to do with the results of your survey.
4. **Keep it relevant** – Ask questions that provide you with the information you need.
5. **Encourage participation** – Your surveyors may offer participants an opportunity to enter a prize drawing, for example.

*For more on how to plan an event, and a sample survey, go to*

*www.TexasYes.org, click on Member's Corner and Resources for a Texas Yes! Event Starter Kit.*

## Off-Beat, Off the Beaten Path

As seen on Ranch Road 12 in Hays County: "Chili Cook-Off and Homeland Security Fair"

Only in Texas would you find such an off-beat combo event. What does your community offer that is unique? Inventory your strengths. Build from within. For what products are you known (agriculture, cottage industries, etc.)? Are there value-added possibilities for cultural heritage or nature tourism? Build an event around it just like these creative communities across rural Texas year 'round.

**May, Athens**  
Annual Texas Fiddlers Contest and Reunion  
[www.athenstx.org](http://www.athenstx.org)

**June, Yoakum**  
Tom Tom Festival  
[www.yoakumareachamber.com](http://www.yoakumareachamber.com)

**July, Clute**  
Great Texas Mosquito Festival  
[www.mosquitofestival.com](http://www.mosquitofestival.com)

**Sept., Bertram/Oatmeal**  
Oatmeal Festival  
[www.bertramchamber.com](http://www.bertramchamber.com)

**Oct., Cuero**  
Turkeyfest  
[www.turkeyfest.org](http://www.turkeyfest.org)

**Nov., Henderson**  
Heritage Syrup Festival  
[www.hendersontx.us](http://www.hendersontx.us)

*SOURCE: www.TravelTex.com, Office of the Governor, Economic Development and Tourism*

**Bringing History to Life:**  
The re-enactment of Colonel Fannin's occupation of the Presidio La Bahia and the Goliad Massacre brings visitors to Goliad in the South Texas Plains region each March.

**College Cash from Hot Air:**  
The creative folks in Carthage raise spirits and scholarships at the Annual Celebration of Flight Balloonfest in May. [www.carthage-texas.com/balloonfest](http://www.carthage-texas.com/balloonfest)

## THE BIGGEST FAIR OF THEM ALL:

**The State Fair of Texas, Sept. 29-Oct. 22, 2006, Dallas, Texas. The Texas Department of Agriculture's Food and Fiber Pavilion hosts more than half of the fair's 3.5 million visitors. People from all walks of life and all across Texas come to check out the Pavilion and learn about rural Texas, nutrition and the many good things that come from agriculture. For more info, go to [www.gotexan.org](http://www.gotexan.org).**



## Texas Yes!

**brings you the best ideas, success secrets and networking opportunities from across rural Texas. Want to tell us what's working in your town? Do you have a theme or subject you would like to see featured in an upcoming issue of the infoletter?**

**We would be delighted to have you share it with us.**

**Send an e-mail to: [jackiebenton@agr.state.tx.us](mailto:jackiebenton@agr.state.tx.us).**

**"...change comes like a little wind that ruffles the curtains at dawn ... like the stealthy perfume of wildflowers hidden in the grass."**

– John Steinbeck, American novelist

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