



Become A Member

Upcoming Events

Communities Working Together to Accomplish What One Community Cannot Do Alone

The E—Update



Travel the Back Roads of the Texas Midwest
You'll be surprised at what you find!

"The importance of our travel and tourism industry is not only showcased in the smiles and treasured memories of happy vacationers, but also in the impacts of this critical industry on the prosperity of our state."
Governor Greg Abbott

The Texas Midwest Region is Primed for Upcoming Travel Plans

At a recent Abilene CVB Meeting, Executive Director Nanci Liles reported on the nationwide state of travel which gives very promising predications for our region:

- 60% of travelers have been vaccinated
- 88% have tentative leisure trip plans
- 71.6% will take a vacation between Memorial Day and Labor Day
- 71% will travel out of state (Texas remains one of the top destinations for tourists)
- 34% will travel by airplane (which means the rest will be hopping in a car)
- Beach destinations are #1 (35.7%) with [rural](#) a close 2nd (34.7%)



With the opportunities before us, let's put on our friendliest smiles, sweep the sidewalks, and put flowers in the pots - our tourists are coming and they can't wait to discover all we have to offer!

On a related note, our [2021 Visitors Guide](#) has been delivered to each of the Texas Travel Centers, all the Harley-Davidson Dealerships in Texas, and each of the visitors centers across our region and beyond. If your community doesn't have this incredible travel resource on your shelf or you are one of our member communities and need a new supply, give us a call at 325-795-8626 and will get them to you!

Also, check our [Facebook Page](#)! We recently completed our 52-community member tour and captured amazing photos of the sites and attractions unique to our part of Texas. Join the over 4,700 followers of our page and be sure to invite your family and friends to join you.

Networking is Back - TMCN Hosts First In-Person Membership Meeting Since January 2020



It was great to see everyone at the April Membership Meeting held in the beautiful [Community Foundation of Abilene's](#) Community Room. Close to 50 community members, marketing sponsors, and resource partners were in attendance.

Many thanks to Diana Lopez, City Manager for the [City of Coleman](#) for sharing her community's incredible Snow-Vid 2021 saga and how the community pulled together to prevail after 48 hours of no utilities. Diana additionally joined [City](#)

[of Ballinger](#) City Manager Brian Frieda and [City of Brady](#) City Manager Dennis Jobe to share the details of their expanding municipal partnership focused on fostering good neighborly relationships to benefit their citizens and community. In the concluding networking, it was exciting and inspiring to hear how many of our member communities are turning a positive corner after COVID and showcasing the fact that our region is definitely on the rebound with an extremely bright ahead!

Changing of the Guard - Welcome to our New Executive Director

The Texas Midwest Community Network entered another exciting chapter with the announcement of our new Executive Director during the recent Membership Meeting! Lori Dodd is no stranger to TMCN having been an active member from the City of Gorman and Past President of the Board of Directors. She currently serves as the Gorman EDC Director and mentored several students through our Leadership TMCN Program. Lori's passion for rural life and her keen understand of the needs of our members will certainly ensure our organization's continued growth and valuable programming!



We also recognized outgoing Executive Director Kathy Keane and wished her well in her upcoming retirement after almost thirteen years with our organization - almost eight years at the helm and five years on the Board of Directors. *"Kathy has been an invaluable asset to the entire TMCN region, and while we are sad to see her leave the organization, we're excited that she is embracing this time to fulfill aspirations with her family. On behalf of the TMCN Board of Directors and the entire TMCN region, I want to thank Kathy for her tireless dedication to our organization and wish her the best on her future adventures."*, Board President Erin Corbell.

As a fitting recognition of our next chapter, we were thrilled to capture this photo representing the leadership history of our organization - Nicki Harle, first Executive Director and Founder of TMCN; Lori Dodd; and Kathy Keane.

Leadership TMCN Kicks Off It's Eighth Year



Texas Midwest had an exciting start to this year's Leadership TMCN with returning facilitators Mike Daggs and Kevin Tutt with **Tutt & Daggs**! Mike provided an inspiring introduction of the program while highlighting the life-changing gains students and mentors will experience. Kevin led the group in an exercise to see change differently - realizing that great results are experienced in the difficulty of change.

Thank you to the leadership represented by the **Snyder Chamber of Commerce**, **City of Baird**, **Breckenridge Chamber of Commerce** and **Coleman Economic Development Corporation** for believing in your young leaders of tomorrow! We're also sending a huge thank you to TMCN Marketing Partner **Jacob & Martin** for again hosting us at their state-of-the-art conference center.

We seem to say this every year but this group of exceptional students are truly impressive and inspiring - stay tuned!

TMCN and the West Central Texas COG Set Date for Newly Elected Officials Seminar

TMCN and the West Central Texas Council of Governments will again co-host

this year's Newly Elected Officials Seminar on Tuesday, July 13th. The event will be held in the large conference room of the COG offices located at 3702 Loop 322 in Abilene.

The agenda and speakers have been set and include:



PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE/OPEN MEETINGS ACT: Justice John Bailey, 11th Court of Appeals, Eastland

MAKING DOLLARS COUNT IN YOUR BUDGET: Diana Lopez, City Manager, City of Coleman

MAXIMIZING YOUR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POWER: Terra New, Operations Manager and Kelly Cheek, Director of Economic Development, WCTCOG

LUNCH – GUEST SPEAKER: Texas State Representative Glenn Rogers, House District 60

ETHICS AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS: Jeff Betty, Attorney, Practicing in Criminal Law, Government, Law Enforcement, Construction Law and Zoning

EFFECTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS EQUAL SUCCESS: Emily Crawford, City Manager & Mayor Steven Haynes, City of Brownwood

DEVELOPING VIABLE COMMUNITIES– THE BENEFITS OF GRANTS: Larissa Place, Field Representative, TX Dept. of Agriculture and Rachel Hering, Director, Keep Texas Recycling – Keep Texas Beautiful

The cost of the seminar is \$25/person and includes lunch and refreshments. The focus is to provide valuable information for newly elected mayors and city councilmembers but is also a great resource and refresher for current mayors, city councilmembers, city managers and other city officials. For more information and to register, [click here](#).

Digital Texas Coalition Making Great Strides in the Legislative Session



As a member of the Digital Texas Coalition Subcommittee, we are happy to announce that HB/SB 5 (relating to the expansion of broadband services) have both passed the House and Senate and we are awaiting the first meeting of the Conference Committee which is expected to discuss the ultimate location of the State Broadband Office. Currently, the House places the office with the State Comptroller while the Senate places the office with The University of Texas System. While there are roles and opportunities for both locations, the Coalition supports the State Comptroller's Office. A letter outlining the advantages of the Comptroller's Office has been

sent to members of the Conference Committee and is signed by over 90 organizations representing all regions of the state and various sectors including AT&T, Texas Cable Association, Texas Telephone Association, and Texas Electric Co-ops.

Emergency Broadband Benefit Program

On May 12th, the Emergency Broadband Benefit program began. This Program offers

- Up to \$50/month discount for broadband service
- Up to \$75/month discount for households on qualifying Tribal lands
- A one-time discount of up to \$100 for a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet purchased through a participating provider

To learn more about eligibility and how to apply, go to the [FCC Website](#) or utilize the [Media Toolkit](#). Interested parties can also call an 866 number or apply for the benefit via the website.

Office of the Commissioner to Host Virtual Roundtable

The Office of the Commissioner Representing Employers for the Texas Workforce Commission is hosting an upcoming virtual **TEXANS RETURN TO WORK** roundtable in partnership with the Office of the Governor-Economic Development & Tourism, the Texas Restaurant Association, the Texas Trucking Association, the Texas Builders Association, the Texas Travel Alliance, the Texas Association of Business, the National Federation of Independent Business-Texas and statewide local Workforce Solution Offices. The roundtable will be held on Thursday, May 20th from 10-11:30 am.



The discussion will focus on innovative ideas and best practices employers are utilizing to recruit, hire, and retain individuals as a result of the current labor shortage many are experiencing. They will also discuss **Return to Work** efforts taking place at the state and local level.

Please share this invitation with your business community and any other employer you think might benefit as we seek to maximize Return to Work efforts in the **TEXAS** spirit and in the **TEXAS** way! To register for this roundtable, [click here](#).

Governor Abbott, TDEM, and TMD Launch State Mobile Vaccination Call Center



Governor Greg Abbott, the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM), and the Texas Military Department (TMD) launched the State Mobile Vaccination Team Call Center on May 7th. Texas businesses or civic organizations can now call 844-90-TEXAS and select Option 3 to schedule a visit from a state mobile

vaccine team to vaccinate employees, visitors, or members. To qualify for a visit, a business or civic organization must have 10 or more employees, visitors, or members who voluntarily choose to be vaccinated. Homebound Texans are also encouraged to call the hotline and select Option 1 to request a state mobile vaccination team to visit their home.

"Vaccines are the most effective tool in Texas' fight against COVID-19, and we are committed to making COVID-19 vaccines even more widely available to Texans across

the state," said Governor Abbott. "The State Vaccine Call Center will help connect businesses and civic organizations with these life-saving shots and ensure that more Texans have an opportunity to get vaccinated. I urge organizations and businesses to call 844-90-TEXAS and schedule a visit from a state mobile vaccine team. Here in Texas, COVID-19 vaccines will always be strongly encouraged and always voluntary."



A Message from Representative Glenn Rogers
Making Rural Texas Count
May 3, 2021

From 2010 to 2020, the population of Texas grew by more than 4.5 million people, making our state the second-most populous and fastest growing state in the country. Our cities are growing at an incredible rate. Because of this, many people often overlook the importance of rural Texas to our state. Many see a divide between urban and rural Texas, with the two having vastly different and conflicting interests. However, I believe that as rural Texas goes, so goes all of Texas. Let me explain.

More than half of the state's 254 counties are considered rural, and much of this land is used for agriculture. More than 127 million Texas acres are dedicated to farming and ranching. Agricultural production in Texas is among our nation's leaders. For instance, Texas has more than 13 million head of beef cattle in the state, nearly double the amount of the second-leading state. Texas also leads the nation in cotton production with nearly five million bales annually, more than double the second-leading producer. That's not all, either. Texas leads in production of sheep, goats, mohair, horses, and hay.

While rural Texas is home to a thriving agricultural industry, it is also home to the nation's strongest energy sector. Our state accounted for 43% of the nation's crude oil production and 26% of the nation's natural gas production in 2020. When it comes to green energy, Texas is the nation's leading wind energy producer. Both of these types of energy – oil and gas and wind energy – rely heavily on rural Texas for production. I share this information to show that the economy of our great state relies on rural Texas and rural Texans. However, because of the trajectory of our population, rural Texas is at risk of losing its voice. There are more legislative seats in metro Houston than there are west of the I-35 corridor. We very likely will lose one, maybe two seats during redistricting.

The growing numbers in urban areas are creating opportunities for our rural communities, however. Wanting to escape large crowds (and to get away from restrictions brought about by COVID), folks from the city are starting to find their way to our rural communities. Many of these are not just visiting our lakes, parks and open spaces but they have discovered that with adequate broadband access, they can live and work in rural Texas without the hassles of city living.

We are seeing this throughout House District 60 – lakes such as Brownwood, Granbury, Palo Pinto, Cisco and Possum Kingdom are all experiencing a record influx of permanent residents. We are seeing new homes being built throughout the area and many others being renovated. Many of our cities and towns are once again showing signs of growth. For instance, the people of Mineral Wells are investing in the revitalization of the city's historic hotels with an eye toward a growing tourism sector. Cisco is seeing a revitalization of its downtown and new housing developments.

Coleman is experiencing a renaissance with more businesses opening downtown and several existing businesses expanding.

But WE need to do more! A town is either growing or dying – it's up to us, it's up to each of our cities and our citizens, to recognize this unique opportunity before us. We have to make our communities attractive to newcomers. We have to work to attract new businesses and welcome new ideas. All too often, this is a challenge for rural communities because, well, some of us are a bit too "set in our ways". However, the upside of new people, new businesses, increased sales tax revenue, solvent school districts and financially sound hospitals should make us all work harder to make our communities more appealing.

We rural Texans are a resilient bunch. We understand the importance of coming together as a community and working together for the betterment of our hometowns. I know that rural Texas can once again show the rest of our state – and our country – how strong we are. The time is now. The challenge is before us. The opportunity is here. WE can make this happen!

Job Openings

Looking for a career change? Check out the current opening throughout the region [here](#). Member community representatives who would like to have their job posted, please contact us at tmcn@tmcn.org.



Regional Career Changes

Here are a few career changes within our region you may have missed. We extend our best wishes to those accepting new positions or moving on to new opportunities.



[Breckenridge Economic Development Corporation](#): Colton Buckley, new Executive Director

[City of Clyde](#): Chris McGuire, new City Manager

[Eastland County](#): Judge Rex Fields will retire at the end of his term (December 2022)

[Graham Economic Development Corporation](#): Grant Ingram, new Director and former Graham CVB Manager, will assume his new position on June 7th



Your Regional Resource Connection

We have worked diligently to bring you timely information and resources to assist you and your community in overcoming the challenges presented by COVID-19 and put you on a path to economic recovery.

If you have not already done so, please check out the **Resource & Links** under the **Members Tab** on our [website](#). This page is continually updated with the latest news, announcements and resources coming out of Washington, the Governor's Office, State agencies, and our vast base of local and regional community partners. You will also find contact information for various State agencies, National and State Legislators, Workforce and SBDC Offices.

We are also posting timely informational resources, sharing articles of interest, and links to informative webinars on our Facebook Page through our internal TMCN ListServ and on our [Facebook Page](#). We trust you have found this information timely and of value to you and your communities. Our promise to you is to continue to be diligent in keeping you abreast of the current news and events affecting our region.



May 20: Webinar: Digital marketing: What it is, How to Determine the Best Fit for your Business, and How to Use it, Angelo State University SBDC, to register [click here](#)

May 26: Webinar: Microsoft Outlook – Beyond the Basics. Marketing Partner, Tolar Systems, to register [click here](#).

July 13: Newly Elected Officials Seminar, WCTCOG, FMI [Click Here](#)

July 29: TMCN Quarterly Membership Meeting, West Texas Rehab Center, Abilene, FMI [Click Here](#)

October 27: Texas Midwest Annual Conference, Abilene Convention Center, FMI [Click Here](#)

* TMCN Event

New Partner Highlight: Republic Services

Republic Services is an industry leader in U.S. recycling and non-hazardous solid waste disposal. They stand for customer-focused simple solutions, reliability, and environmental responsibility. Through their subsidiaries, Republic's collection operations, transfer stations, recycling processing centers, landfills, and environmental services provide effective solutions to make responsible recycling and waste disposal effortless for customers.



Their team of 36,000 is guided by five essential core values – to be Respectful, Responsible, Reliable, Resourceful and Relentless in all they do, every day. These values are at the forefront every time you see the five R's joined together to form the Republic Star. As stated in their mission, it's what makes them who they are and sets them apart from the competition. They are dedicated to doing their part to preserve the environment by creating a cleaner, safer and healthier world where people thrive – not just for today, but for generations to come.

For more information on **TMCN Marketing Partner Republic Services** [Click Here](#).



We Appreciate Our Partners!

The Marketing & Promotions Opportunities Program is one of the primary reasons for the continued success and sustainability of our organization.

We proudly promote and recognize our partners' unwavering support given not only to our organization as a whole but the 53 communities who make up Texas Midwest Community Network. We recognize and express our sincere gratitude for the longstanding and continued support of the following partners and, ask you, where possible, to demonstrate this appreciation by utilizing their services:

Champion: [Golden Spread Electric Cooperative](#) & [West Texas Rehabilitation Center](#)

Patrons: [Hendrick Health System](#), [Jacob|Martin](#), [Republic Services](#) & [Texas State Technical College](#)

Neighbors: [Atmos](#), [AT&T](#), [Center for Community Health & Development](#), [Enprotec/Hibbs & Todd](#), [Howard College-San Angelo](#), [Raise Your Hand Texas](#) & [Tolar Systems](#)

Event Sponsors: [Abilene CVB](#), [Abilene Regional Airport](#), [Angelo State University SBDC-San Angelo](#), [Cisco College](#), [Coleman County Electric Cooperative](#), [Fullerton & Associates PLLC](#), [Oncor](#) & [Texas Tech University SBDC-Abilene](#)

Interested in becoming one of distinguished Marketing Partners? [Click Here](#) for more information and how your company can benefit!

Texas Midwest Community Network

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