

# On My Honor, I Will Do My Best ...

*Building honor through scouting*



At a recent My Honor meeting, Jim Buerger, gesturing, is flanked by Dr. Beverly Waddelton, left, Wood County Sheriff Tom Castloo, Neal Duncan, Greg Hollen and Lee Smith.



**A GROUP OF 30-PLUS TEXANS** is embarking on a quest to return and restore a simple quality to America: personal integrity.

After pondering the issue for more than a year, the group created a nonprofit called “My Honor” to promote their purpose. The mission of My Honor is to improve Wood County, now and in the future, by helping young boys develop values, morals and personal integrity.

Jim Buerger, a retired publisher and founding member, said, “Our mission is to promote honor ... with the *Webster’s* definition of honor being ‘personal integrity.’” Buerger said that historically, honor was primarily promoted within the family—but also can be diminished there, especially without a positive male role model.

The idea for My Honor came from a chance meeting between a local Cub Scout den mother and Buerger. When he asked how he could help, she replied, “We need a man. Our 9-year-old boys don’t have a man in their life.”

The phenomenon of absent fathers “creates a tremendous hardship and difficulty on young people, their families and ultimately their community—which impacts everything including education, public safety, the economy and all of their surroundings,” Buerger said.

According to the 2016 U.S. Census, 17.2 million children live in households with single mothers. Studies have shown that boys without an active father figure struggle with self-respect and motivation, leading to poor grades, delinquency and lack of direction into adulthood. Those boys-turned-men often perpetuate the problem with their own children.

Over the past year, My Honor has built an organizational

structure that’s modeled after and aligned with a time-tested and well-known integrity builder: the Boy Scouts of America.

The founders of My Honor believe Boy Scouts has the proven framework and guiding principles to instill honor. What the scouts are lacking, at least locally, is enough adult male leaders who are willing and able to help the boys walk the path to productive and honorable citizenship, service and leadership. Without those men, it’s hard to recruit more scouts, group leaders believe.

Local business owner Neal Duncan said he joined My Honor because he’d experienced that lack of leadership firsthand. When he and his wife, Margo, searched for a Cub Scout pack for their son, James, they had a difficult time even making contact with a pack. Once they did, Duncan said, “It became apparent there was a lack of support.” When they finally found a place to sign up, the troop organizer said, “Great! You can be the den leader!”

Now, with a year under his belt, Duncan will be taking over as the troop’s cub master. He’ll replace a cub master who had been driving over from Big Sandy to help.

Working toward solving the scouting and leadership dilemmas, My Honor uses a three-pronged approach:

- 1.) Encouraging more men to be involved in scouting,
- 2.) Inspiring more boys to become scouts, and
- 3.) Raising funds to support scouting.

My Honor has begun planning meetings to build out its structure and soon will undertake its first project.

The Boy Scouts of America will hold the Wo-Ha-Li District Camporee on April 28–30 at the Mineola Nature Preserve. At



the Camporee, about 250 boys from 22 area scout troops will gather for a weekend of camping and hands-on adventure activities. Examples include archery, tomahawk-throwing, a BB-gun range and much more. Each troop will provide a demonstration or activity, and My Honor will be there to support them.

Tommy Brown, Troop 36 assistant scout master and a member of My Honor, is helping to organize the event. “This is an exciting time for all of the boys, nonscouts and scouts alike,” he said. “There will be a lot to see and do, and it’s a good opportunity for the scouts to show off their scouting skills to the public and also to potential scouts.”

Initially, My Honor will concentrate on promoting the Camporee by introducing nonscouts and their parents to typical scouting activities offered at the Camporee, and they will host a hospitality event. Any boy ages 6–17 who is interested in scouting, along with his family, is invited to visit the Camporee on Saturday, April 29, 9 a.m.–1 p.m.

The group hopes to gain more members for My Honor with a scouting alumni information tent at the Camporee.

“Anybody who has been an Eagle—or who has been a scout for 10 seconds—is a BSA alumni and welcome,” Duncan said. “Once a scout, always a scout!”

Speaking of alumni: The four founding board members of My Honor—Tom Castloo, Wood County sheriff; Greg Hollen, city secretary/administrator of the City of Quitman; Troy Robinson, vice chairman of Bank Texas; and Buerger—all have histories with scouting.

Each man points to his experiences as helping to develop

his character, and they all look forward to working with like minds to promote scouting.

Castloo underscored the need for strong male role models. “We want to help give these boys all of the tools that they can possibly draw from, so that they can have a good moral compass to help future and older generations,” he said. “And, I’d like to be able to be a part of that and give them some of those tools to use. Scouting teaches many things about the outdoors and camping and fishing, but it also teaches you how to be a man. My dad was a scout master back in the ’60s, and I was a scout master in the ’80s. What we are able to teach kids will last the rest of their lives. If they will continue to go by the scout’s oath—duty to God and country, duty to other people, and duty to self—it sums it all up.”

My Honor has about 35 members, male and female, and Buerger said they are looking for all types of individuals to join—not just men. The only criterion for joining My Honor is for an individual to embrace the value of personal integrity.

The group also is hoping to recruit those with expertise in marketing and administration to help them as they develop. They’ll need the advice and the services of people experienced with accounting, public relations, marketing and advertising, as well as individuals with grant experience.

As the group builds its structure, Buerger said he hopes that My Honor can someday be expanded across the nation.

“We are designing this for the long haul. This is the beginning of a multigenerational effort.”

To learn more about My Honor, or for more information on the Camporee, go to [myhonor.net](http://myhonor.net).

# Local Student Will Represent WCEC in DC

**KATELYN "GRACIE" BEECH**, 18, a senior at Yantis High School, won Wood County Electric Cooperative's video contest, and the prize is a ticket to Washington, D.C., this June 7-16 on the Government-in-Action Youth Tour.

She was chosen based on her video submission on the topic, "The Next Big Thing—My Cooperative and Our Future Together." In her video, titled "Plugging In," Beech spoke about the rich cooperative heritage, and then speculated on how the demand for electricity will only grow with the adoption of the modern conveniences used by her generation.

Beech is president of the Yantis FFA and vice president of the Area VI FFA Association, and has held past officer positions in the Mineola District. She competes in a variety of other National FFA Organization events, including showing market lambs and public speaking. She is a member of the Yantis



volleyball team and participates in Academic UIL, BETA Club, and the Gifted and Talented Program. She is also treasurer of the Spanish Club and attends Seymour Bible Fellowship Church.

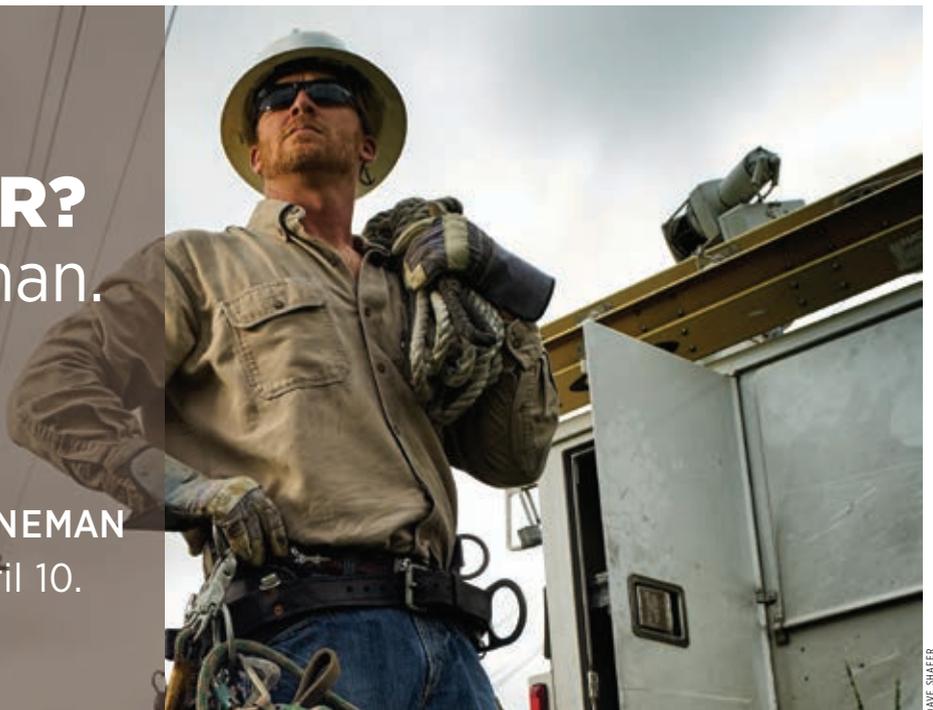
One of Beech's stated missions in life is to inspire others to be leaders. To do that, she plans to attend Texas A&M University in Commerce to study agricultural communications.

Beech will travel to Washington with 146 other Youth Tour winners from other Texas electric cooperatives. She will have the opportunity to meet congressional representatives, and visit historic memorials and cultural centers in our nation's capital.

Beech is the daughter of WCEC members Shannon and Kristi Beech of Quitman. She has an older brother, Dylan, and she is the granddaughter of Freddie and Linda Fisher of Yantis, and Norma Beech of Quitman.

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DAVE SHAFER



# Building Leaders

*WCEC to sponsor 10 teens at leadership camp*

**WOOD COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**, along with eight other east Texas electric cooperatives, is once again presenting the annual East Texas Rural Electric Youth Seminar, a teen leadership camp.

This year, ETREYS will be June 26–30 at East Texas Baptist University in Marshall. WCEC will send 10 students, with all expenses paid, to join about 150 others also sponsored by electric cooperatives from across East Texas, for this exciting experience.

To be eligible for one of WCEC's spots, teens must be high school sophomores or juniors who are attending school within the nine-county WCEC service area. Participants are selected on the basis of overall excellence and involvement in extra-curricular activities, academic awards and civic involvement.

While at ETREYS, students can expect to participate in workshops, seminars and peer-group activities that include leadership development and pure entertainment. Nationally known personalities, industry leaders and community leaders are scheduled to speak at this year's event. Additionally, each student has a chance to compete for scholarships.

WCEC is committed to our community and the education and growth of our students. Sending students to ETREYS is just another way to further that commitment.

Students interested in applying for the program can download the ETREYS application at [wcec.org](http://wcec.org) under the Community tab. The deadline to submit an application is April 22.

## Wood County Electric Cooperative

501 S. Main St. • P.O. Box 1827  
Quitman, TX 75783

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## Contact Us

### CALL US

(903) 763-2203

### EMAIL

[info@wcec.org](mailto:info@wcec.org)

### OUTAGE HOTLINE

1-866-415-2951

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### MOBILE CONVENIENCE CENTER

**Monday**, First Methodist Church, *Van*

**Tuesday**, Family Dollar, *Mount Vernon*

**Wednesday**, City National Bank, *Hawkins*

**Thursday**, Brookshire's, *Winnboro*

**Friday**, Economy Drug, *Grand Saline*