



Quitman Pilot members, from left: Martha Scroggins, Sherry Johnson and Marti Busbee

Pilots' Community Service Is Most Uplifting

We are almost 100 years and 800 miles away from Macon, Georgia, in 1921. But an international service organization that was founded in that time and place by 40 local businesswomen has taken a foothold in East Texas. We can even say East Texas has taken a handhold of it, grabbing it right by the helm.

That organization is Pilot International, named for the intrepid riverboat pilots of the day whose occupation symbolized leadership and guidance. Now there are more than 8,130 adult members internationally, men and women called Pilots. And there are just over 8,000 boys and girls ages 6-18 who are members of the youth organization, called Anchor. There are 378 Pilot Clubs and 300 Anchor Clubs across the United States, Bahamas, Canada, Japan, Singapore, the United Kingdom and South Africa. Their principles are elegantly simple: friendship and service.

That was exactly what Sherry Johnson was looking for when she and her husband, Craig, moved back to Craig's hometown of Quitman. Sherry explains: "Jerry Nichols, a friend of Craig's family, involved me and gave me the gift of membership in Pilot. I joined in 1991. Once I joined Pilot, I knew a true sense of community. Pilot has even given me a stronger sense of community as an adult—more than I ever had as a child in my hometown of Paradise. Our club is made of people truly interested in the community and giving back."

Because of her hard work over the years, Sherry was named Pilot of the Year twice. In 1999, she served as president of the Quitman club. That year she was also instrumental in chartering the Anchor Club of Quitman. Later she served in several positions at the district level, eventually becoming the Texas district governor in 2003-04.

Then Sherry began serving at "the PI level," going on to chair the international convention, serving as director and holding officer positions. In July, she was named Pilot International president at the national convention in Chicago.

Sherry's relationship with Pilot International and her pro-

fessional worklife are rather symbiotic. Since 2008, she has been the director of program services for the Make-A-Wish Foundation of North Texas. In this executive role, she manages the wish-granting process for 145 North Texas counties.

"I was chosen for my job—I know, 100 percent—because of my past positions and experiences with Pilot International," she says. "There are a lot of young people and even more mature people that may not understand what community service can do for them. But I'd like to tell them: Pilot fills your pitcher back up and gives you the strength and hope and drive to accomplish."

She also offers another reason she loves Pilot: "I don't have a lot of extended family. The Pilots—they are my family. They are my sense of community along with the many things that we do together."

The Texas Pilots could not be more proud of her. "This is a significant time in our club because of Sherry's position," says Marti Busbee, the 2014-15 president of the Quitman Pilot Club. "One of our primary club missions this year is to support Sherry."

To kick off their support right, 13 Quitman club members drove from East Texas to Chicago for the national convention when Sherry was installed as PI president. And while they celebrated, they went to work, too, bringing and setting up all of the decorations for each meeting that Sherry chaired.

As PI president, Sherry is facing the same struggle as many other U.S. service clubs—to acquire new and younger members. According to *Philanthropy Daily*, millennials (people between the ages of 18 and 34) value causes over organizations. Members of this age group are extremely active and

The annual Pilot Club Chili Cook-Off





**PILOT CLUBS IN WCEC'S
NINE-COUNTY SERVICE TERRITORY**

WOOD COUNTY

Mineola	mineolapilotclub@gmail.com
Quitman	busbeemarti839@gmail.com
Winnsboro	kelli@nabors-horton.com

HOPKINS COUNTY

Sulphur Springs	debrae55@yahoo.com
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SMITH COUNTY

Tyler	bateman3844@gmail.com
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TITUS COUNTY

Mount Pleasant	sold@gnty.com
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VAN ZANDT COUNTY

Wills Point	lmayfield2@hotmail.com
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involved in finding problems and solving them, but they don't join a lot of clubs. They use less traditional routes for paths of service, including using the Internet as a means to join a community.

To better help PI understand the phenomenon, Sherry has put together an advisory committee of Anchors and young professionals. "We used to tell them what to do," she says. "Now we have an advisory committee for them to tell us what we need to do in becoming their service organization of choice.

"Developing new members is a major goal. And we must work on a process to bridge the gap. People want to serve their communities. Pilot will work to develop a series of options that will allow people to work and serve their communities and give them a framework to make it easier."

That's why she has also been working to support another East Texas star, a college student named Ronald Hollins Jr.

Ronald was a very active member of the Anchor Club of Quitman and also served as the Texas District Anchor president in 2007-08. He's now at college, and he misses the sense of community he felt with Anchor Club.

In earlier PI days, a subsidiary organization called Compass Club offered an outlet for leadership and community service at college. Ronald is working to bring the Compass Club back. He spoke at the PI national convention in Chicago about reinstating Compass as a way to engage with college students and young professionals.

Even as PI works on developing more contemporary avenues for future members, the organization is dedicated to promoting its three umbrella causes of brain safety and fitness; youth development and leadership; and caring for families in time of need. Local Pilot clubs are free to select initiatives that best suit their communities.

The Quitman Pilot Club is a good example of how local clubs operate. It has spearheaded or been instrumental in producing many community events and benefits. Annually, the members offer a sizable donation to the Northeast Texas Child Advocacy Center to help with foster children's needs during the Christmas season. During the fall, they donate new backpacks to the Child Welfare Board for these same foster children. They help to hold an annual first responders appreciation dinner for all of those workers serving Wood County. And they offer scholarships to high school students. When a call came from PI to help with aid to a tornado-ravaged town in north Mississippi this year, Quitman Pilots helped.

The club has also been instrumental in rallying community support and fundraising to make significant improvements to the community, such as the playground at Governor Jim Hogg City Park and the greenhouse at the Wood County Special Education campus.

The club conducts an annual elementary school bicycle rodeo at three local schools to promote brain safety. Working with law enforcement, club members offer a bike safety workshop for first- and second-graders. The first-graders are given helmets and taught the importance of wearing them.

The Pilots also participate in Safe Kids programs that stress helmet and car seat safety. They urge children to pay attention to surroundings while using electronic gadgets to avoid injuries.

One of the signature annual events of the Quitman Pilots is hosting the Special Olympics, which this spring featured about 150 athletes. The club also used the Special Olympics as a "Share Pilot" occasion, a form of recruiting that immerses potential members in an experience and gets them directly involved in the joy and sense of accomplishment.

Other Pilots and programs of note:

- ▶ Patricia Hightower works with other Pilot members once a month at area high schools, teaching leadership skills and the importance of community service to students.
- ▶ Janell Abbott, a Mineola Pilot, was named Anchor advisor of the year at the Chicago convention.
- ▶ Pilot members from Quitman, Mineola and Winnsboro team with the Wood County Sheriff's Department on a pro-



Sherry Johnson shows the flag that will adorn the Quitman chapter during her term as president of Pilot International.

gram called Project Lifesaver. They provide wander-guard tracking devices for people with brain disabilities, such as autism or Alzheimer's, that may cause them to wander. The clubs provide the funding for the devices, and the sheriff's office calibrates and maintains the equipment and performs tracking if a person becomes lost. Martha Scroggins became involved in PI after approaching the club in 2007 to learn about Project Lifesaver because her father had Alzheimer's.

► Pilot members conduct three weekend-long camps for adult survivors of traumatic brain injuries. The camps offer recreation for these adults while also providing relief for family caregivers. Winnsboro's Joanna Horton was recently honored for work with these camps.

The Quitman Pilot Club meets at 6:30 p.m. the third Tuesday of each month at the Quitman Library. In the nine counties that Wood County Electric Cooperative serves, there are seven Pilot clubs. Learn more about their mission at pilotinternational.org or from a club listed on Page 22.



Wood County Electric Cooperative

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

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Debbie Robinson

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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MEMBER BENEFITS AND SERVICES

- Online account access and bill payment
- Paperless E-Bill services
- Free bill-paying app
- Visa, MasterCard, American Express and Discover accepted
- SmartPower prepay electric system
- Scholarships and youth programs
- Safety and energy conservation programs

MOBILE CONVENIENCE CENTER

Monday, First Methodist Church, *Van*
Tuesday, Family Dollar, *Mount Vernon*
Wednesday, City National Bank, *Hawkins*
Thursday, Brookshire's, *Winnsboro*
Friday, Economy Drug, *Grand Saline*



Contact Us

CALL US
(903) 763-2203

EMAIL
info@wcec.org

OUTAGE HOTLINE
1-866-415-2951

FIND US ON THE WEB
wcec.org

Power Onward. Power Upward.

Announcing new \$6,000 scholarship program

Returning adult student? Nontraditional student? Adult learner? No matter what you call them, many people return to school after beginning a career or a family. The reasons are as varied as the people and the educational disciplines they pursue. The common denominators for most of them are an increased maturity level and a passion and drive to achieve an educational milestone.

There are teachers who may want to move into administration or teach at a higher level, licensed vocational nurses who are taking steps to become registered nurses, or those who want to acquire a master's degree or professional accreditation of some kind in any field. There are still others entering college or trade school for the first time to become licensed as an electric lineman or an electrician, or in heating and refrigeration or the cosmetology trade.

Any educational undertaking, especially as an older adult, takes an enormous commitment—and no small bit of courage. At WCEC, we recognize that, and we want to help.

For the past several years, WCEC has awarded 10 annual regular scholarships. These were open to competition from adults, but an adult has never yet been awarded one. With increased numbers of returning adult students entering colleges and trade schools, as well as increased interest in WCEC's scholarships for them,

WCEC has now developed a program to serve these deserving adult students. It's called Power Upward, and it comprises three scholarships of \$2,000 each.

Qualified applicants must be active members or member spouses living on the system, and aged 21 or over. Adult children of members do not qualify. Qualifiers cannot

have won a previous scholarship from WCEC. They must have been accepted into a college, trade school or another post-secondary program, and must be registered for a minimum of nine hours.

To apply, submit a completed official application with two letters of reference and a 500-word essay describing the following:

- ▶ Reasons for continuing your education.
- ▶ Why you have chosen your particular field of study.
- ▶ How it will help you with your future goals.

The deadline for applications to arrive at the WCEC offices is November 19, 2014. (This is not a "postmarked by" deadline, so please allow extra lead time for delivery by mail.) Late or incomplete applications will be disqualified. Applications will be judged and scholarships awarded by the end of the year. Applications are available on our website at wcec.org under the Community Programs tab, or by calling the cooperative at (903) 763-2203.

Adults: This one is all for you!

SAVE THE DATE!



**Wood County
Electric Cooperative**

76th Annual Meeting

October 10, 2014

**Governor Jim Hogg City Park
Quitman**

Entertainment 12:30 p.m.
Meeting 2 p.m.

*As always, the employees and staff
look forward to seeing our members.
We hope to see you there.*

ISTOCK © STEVE DEBENPORT





Seasonal Safety Reminders

Wood County EC reminds you to keep electrical safety in mind as the cooler fall weather moves many activities back indoors. The following safety tips will help you stay safe during the change of seasons.

Outdoors

► Safely store warm-weather tools including lawn mowers and trimmers. Check cold-weather tools such as chainsaws and leaf blowers—and their power cords, if they're corded—for unusual wear and tear. Repair or replace worn tools or parts right away.

► Unplug and safely store battery chargers that won't be in use again until spring.

► Use only weatherproof electrical devices for outside activities. Protect outdoor electrical devices from moisture. Make sure electrical equipment that has been wet is inspected and reconditioned by a certified repair technician.

► Keep leaves, either dry or wet, swept away from outdoor lighting, outlets and power cords.

Indoors

► Make sure electric blankets are in good repair and certified by an independent testing lab such as Underwriters Laboratories, Canadian Standards Association or Electrical Testing Laboratories. (The tags will appear with the logos UL,



CSA or ETL.) Power cords should not be frayed, cracked or cut.

► Do not tuck your electric blanket under mattresses or

children, and do not put anything, such as comforters or bedspreads, on top of the blanket while it is in use.

► Never allow pets to sleep on or underneath an electric blanket.

Update and Win

Dear Member,

Have you updated your contact information with us lately? If not, we hope you will.

We are encouraging all members to share their cellphone numbers and email addresses with us. During emergencies, we make our best effort to relay information via radio and TV broadcast, Facebook and our website, wcec.org. But as more members find themselves on the go, text and email have emerged as other preferred ways for members to receive information that they want, FAST.

If you trust us with your information, we will NEVER, EVER sell it or give it to others. We won't "spam" you with incessant messages. You'll just receive a monthly WCEC e-newsletter from us to your email address—and only if you want it. When you get the first one, simply opt out if you don't.

We also intend to use mobile numbers and email addresses to send timely outage information in the future. We think the capability for members to receive news will be especially welcome during extreme weather events.

That's it. No spamming. No sales. We'll just be sending important information we believe you'll want to receive.

To promote this effort, we've sent out bill stuffers with a handy form that can be mailed back with the bill. For those who don't receive bills, just visit wcec.org and click "Update Me." Fill in the data, and we'll update our records.

On October 31, we'll hold a drawing for a chance to win an iPad or a \$300 bill credit—winner's choice. We will draw one winner from accounts with active cellphone numbers and one from accounts with current email addresses. If you list both, you will have two chances to win.

We will use the provided email address and cellphone number to contact the winners October 31. Good luck!