



**ABOVE:** Beverly Burns' creative streak extends in many directions, as does her talent. She can just as easily reupholster a chair as crochet a decorative item or upcycle old bottles into wind chimes. **RIGHT:** Some "pretty ladies," as Burns calls her chairs, all dressed up and waiting for new homes



# Mother of Necessity, Invention and Rejuvenation

**A NATIVE TEXAN**—but just barely—Beverly Burns was born high above the Red River on the bridge connecting Texas and Arkansas. By God's grace, it was on the Texas side. After that unusual beginning, Burns, a self-proclaimed Army brat, lived all over the United States before returning to Texas, where she graduated from Hallsville High School.

Burns married early. As sometimes happens, she wound up becoming a single mom of two. She also faced the financial challenges that usually come with that status. Of the time, she said, "I couldn't buy new, so I just fixed up what we had."

What may have been a necessity way back then has become a present-day artful talent of upcycling and repurposing furniture.

Burns has always loved painting stuff, including furniture. Then she met her first upholstery challenge: She wanted to redo a chair for her teenage daughter's room. Burns said her mom told her, "Just wait until I get there, and we will tear it

apart and see what we have and then we can put it back together."

That project must have been a success because decades have passed and Burns has continued to hone her skills by reconditioning and repurposing items. Since then, she has given new life to hundreds of objects that otherwise may have been destined for the dump.

She says, almost as a point of pride, "I've never bought any piece of furniture new. I love antiques and sometimes they have a story to them—and sometimes not, and that is great, too. But when you see a piece, you know it has somebody's life attached to it."

That is partially the reason she continues with her hobby of reviving what most would consider beyond saving. Another reason, she says, is that she's just not one to sit idle. Crafting and creating keep her busy. Mostly, though, she loves the satisfaction she gets when a project and a process are complete. She

said she gets such a great feeling from making something beautiful again.

To find inspiration and pieces to resurrect, Burns haunts garage sales, estate sales and auctions. Condition is not so much a consideration, but she does have her standards. She only works with small pieces that she can handle herself, such as chairs, ottomans, stools and small dressers. And the pieces must be solid wood. It doesn't matter what kind of wood, but it must have "good bones" and be sturdy.

More than anything, the piece has to fall within a certain price range that she has in mind. Once she finishes it, she will more than likely sell it, but she needs to be able to sell it for enough to at least make her money back. And, she says, "I want to sell something that I would be able to afford, or that almost anybody else can afford."

Once Burns has acquired a piece, she brings it home and then looks at the shabbiness of the object and says to herself, "What did I just buy?" But then, I just sit with it for a while and eventually decide what to do with it."

To begin a project, Burns will delve into her fabric stash. She loves fabric and is known to be a hoarder. She buys it on sale, and her sister also gets it for her. "I flop the fabric on the chair and leave it there to see if it works. If it looks like 'grandma grunt,' I'll change it out until it looks good." She insists on a harmony between the fabric and the furniture.

Burns has a way of analyzing the style and era of a chair or piece of furniture and then picking out fabric, paint and technique (such as distressing or decoupage) to bring not only new life to it but also a jovial personality. She does not exactly refurbish pieces to their period, but she gives them new life while honoring the era of their creation.

A good example of this is a 1930s-era vanity. It was painted bright yellow when she found it. With a lot of vision, she painted it a basic black and then accented it by decoupage black-and-white party napkins on the drawers. It's remarkable how those paper napkins gave that piece of furniture such a spark of elegance.

Burns sells most of her handiwork via Facebook groups in Winnsboro and Mineola, and Hopkins and Wood counties. She also attends regional craft and art fairs. One of her favorite venues is the Winnsboro Autumn Trails, October 10 this year. In addition, she will do some custom work.

If someone wants a chair upholstered, they must pick out and buy their own fabric, and she'll set the fee depending on the difficulty and the materials required for her to do the job. Cost depends on whether the piece needs foam or whether the new material can go right over the older piece, and other concerns. The job could cost as little as \$15 a chair or it could be much more, depending on the complexity and materials.

Sometimes Burns needs a break from painting or upholstering furniture to let her joints rest, but she doesn't sit still. She crochets various art objects such as decorative pumpkins or functional coat hangers with clips that rest at various heights for hanging multiple small laundry items such as socks or delicates for drying. Departing from fabric, yarn and wood, she'll break



**ABOVE:** Burns says her wind chimes are more durable than they look. **BELOW:** In Burns' hands, a paper party napkin finds a permanent life as an artistic detail on a vanity.



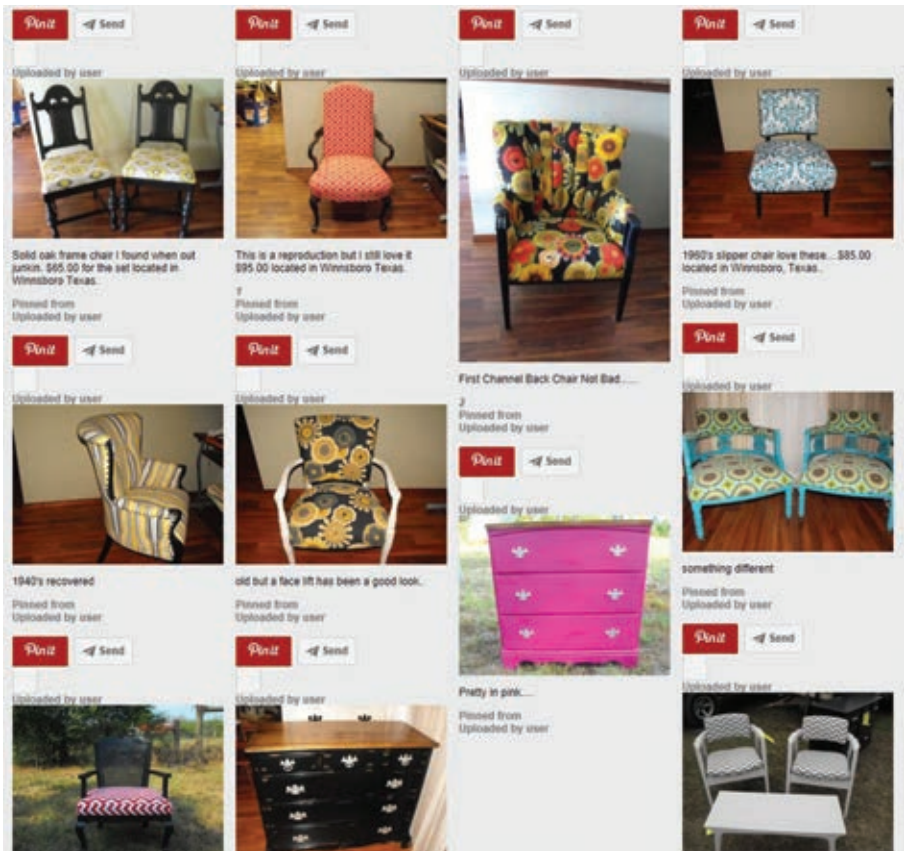


ABOVE: Burns has a boneyard of chairs and other objects waiting to be worked on when the muse strikes her fancy. BELOW: A snapshot of some of Burns' many resurrections

out the glass cutter and fashion gorgeous wind chimes out of old bottles. She also creates plant stands, turning terra cotta saucers into cute little ladybugs. If it involves glue, paint, fabric and making old stuff new, Burns has probably done it. Or she will soon.

If you follow any of the local online garage sales, you have likely seen her work for sale, or will in the future. She's kept true to her passion of creating beautiful pieces while maintaining low prices so anyone can afford them. As a self-sustaining hobby, her work is not a real moneymaker. The proceeds enable her to pluck her next rejuvenation project from possible extinction and make it suitable for a living room near you. Once there, it will certainly be admired and probably be the most striking piece in the room.

Burns, a member of Wood County Electric Cooperative, lives near Winnsboro. To contact her about a project or to see where she'll show her next batch of lovelies, contact her at Bburns19641@hotmail.com.



# Bill-Paying Options Abound at WCEC

**THESE DAYS, THERE ARE COUNTLESS WAYS** to pay for goods and services—some bona fide, some not. One trend that has emerged is the third-party bill-payment service. Some of these services even masquerade as being affiliated with Wood County Electric Cooperative when they are not. While some bill-paying services are legitimate, members who use these should be cautious to pick accredited companies. Also, they should be aware of any additional service fees.

Note that Wood County EC is not affiliated with any third-party bill-paying service. However, we do help our members simplify their bill-paying experience by offering a wide range of our own direct payment options:

**Online:** With online bill paying at [wcec.org](http://wcec.org), you'll never have to write, mail or drop off another check when it's time to pay. Once registered, you can choose options and features such as reminders, auto-pay and paperless electronic billing. You can even set a payment limit.

**Mobile Bill Pay App:** WCEC's free downloadable app enables members to connect and make secure bill payments 24/7 from a compatible smartphone or tablet. Members can also sign up for email or text alerts for bill due date reminders. To get the app, just search for "Wood County Electric Cooperative" in the Apple Store or Android Market and then download it.

**Pay in Person:** We accept payments 8 a.m.–5 p.m., Monday-Friday, at 501 S. Main St. in Quitman or at the Mobile Convenience Center 9:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. weekdays at the following locations: Mondays at the First Methodist Church in Van; Tuesdays at Rutherford and Highway 37 in Mt. Vernon; Wednesdays at City National Bank in Hawkins; Thursdays at Brookshire's in Winnsboro; and Fridays at Economy Drug in Grand Saline.

**Mail:** If you prefer a paper bill via mail, we'll continue to mail your bill monthly.

**EZ Payment Plan:** This option helps you avoid higher bills in winter and summer and evens out payments. You'll be billed the average amount calculated from your previous 12-month history. Payments are automatically deducted from your bank account. Anyone with at least a year of membership and a current balance of \$0 is eligible to enroll in this plan by calling us.

**PrePay:** SmartPower, WCEC's prepay system, offers members a solution to purchase electricity on their own financial schedule. It puts the member in control. SmartPower users never incur late fees or collection charges. Also, users are never surprised by a big bill because they have a real-time data link to the exact amount of electricity they are using. To learn more, call us for a free copy of our SmartPower brochure or informational DVD or VHS.

Acceptable forms of payment include cash; check; money order; or VISA, MasterCard or Discover credit cards.

## NOTICE

**Effective August 1, Wood County Electric Cooperative will no longer accept American Express (AMEX) credit cards as a payment method.**

After analyzing payments taken via credit card, Wood County EC cannot justify the cost to continue to provide the AMEX payment option. We will continue to accept MasterCard, Visa or Discover.

As a nonprofit electric cooperative, good stewardship of costs is one way we work to keep rates affordable for all members. We apologize for any inconvenience this decision might cause.

Thank you for your understanding as we work to serve you effectively and efficiently.



## Wood County Electric Cooperative

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