

and good," he says.

Less than a mile away, his wife, AgriLife Extension agent Tanya Holloway, sat in an office wrapping up allocation of household goods to families that were affected by the fires. (She handles the personal side of natural disasters, like assisting with housing, clothing and food; he covers agricultural issues.) Three months after the disaster, donations have continued to come in.

Taylor Sheridan, the creator of television shows Yellowstone and 1883, held a benefit concert on May 6 in Fort Worth that raised \$1.5 million. The money will be donated to Texas & Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association Disaster Relief Fund and aid in returning life back to normal in the region. "The Panhandle fires have devastated family, friends, and fellow ranchers," Sheridan, who is also president of 6666 Ranch, announced in a press release. "It is incumbent upon all of us to help in any way possible, as we know they would do the same for us."

In Hemphill County, 107 structures were destroyed, including 53 homes in Canadian. Residents lost around 7,000 mother cows and 70% of the land was touched by fire. In neighboring Roberts County, Andy said, that number was 80%. Together, the counties made up nearly 900,000 acres burned.

"The estimation for replacing fences is \$50 million. Just fence," Tanya says. "That doesn't count lost equipment, lost grass, lost herds, and the genetics that went with the herds."

The extension service's preliminary estimate for total losses from the fires is \$123 million, according to a news release last month.

Tanya was in San Angelo for training and happened to be in a session about disaster and recovery when she heard about the fires. The day after the fire came through Canadian, she and Andy set up an office in their house. Within 24 hours, they moved to the AgriLife

Extension office in Canadian setting up a generator so they'd have electricity.

Some "4-H moms" and other women in the office came to help. They started compiling a list of people whose homes had been damaged, scoured Facebook for more names, and started finding those in need places to stay. "By the time the state and federal people got here, we were more than halfway through talking to people," Tanya said.

Though the extension office reeked of smoke, it was spared the worst, despite the fire burning up to the parking lot. The blaze continued north toward the Canadian River, damaged the Sandhills, and destroyed homes on the southeast side of the city. "It's a thousand wonders this entire town didn't burn because it burned all the way around it," Tanya says.

Today, the historic downtown area still stands, even if it is a little less busy. Andy says those who work on ranches aren't coming into town to do as much business. For those who still have livestock, most have moved them to other land outside the county to graze.

The area is ready for the return of tourists this summer, though.

In Canadian, The Bucket continues to serve daily specials like barbecue sandwiches and chicken fried steak. Chess boards and other games sit atop tables for those stopping by Brown Bag Roasters for a coffee. And moviegoers can enjoy a film at the Palace Theatre, a cinema built in 1909.

The heart of Fritch in Roberts County was also spared the worst of the damage. Just north of the city, Lake Meredith National Recreational Area had land and fences burn, but all of it is open, including all trails.

"If you came up here and looked around, you wouldn't know there was a fire," says Eric Smith, superintendent at the park.

Back in Canadian, another spot for visitors was untouched. The Citadelle Art Museum, with

its eclectic art collection compiled by the Abraham family in the 1970s, is housed in a 1909 church-turned-mansion. Those stopping by can appreciate the stained-glass windows, a pink and red bathroom, and the original artwork for the Dec. 22 edition of The Saturday Evening Post in 1928.

"Remember that we're still here," says Wendie Cook, the museum's executive director. "And the way you can help us survive and recover economically is to come visit us and spend some time."

More signs of recovery will continue in October, when the

Fall Foliage Festival occurs in Canadian. Since 1957, the town has celebrated the changing of the seasons with fall-themed family-friendly activities. According to Jackie McPherson, director of the Chamber of Commerce, there are a lot of historic homes and pretty trees in town that will be showcased.

"I'm hoping we're going to have a bigger crowd this year," she says. "Obviously, it's not going to be the same. But we're going to continue a tradition that's been fostered and loved since the '50s. The city of Canadian is here and stronger than before."

The Fearless Cowgirls of Mexican Rodeo

By Danielle Lopez

Imagine riding a horse through an arena. The sun hits your back as you guide the thousand-pound animal in a synchronized pattern with seven other riders: Trot in a perfect circle. Stop. Spin in place. Then weave through a line of sprinting horses at just the right speed, careful not to ram into one.

Now imagine doing all of this sidesaddle. In a 15-pound dress.

Such is reality for the athletes who compete in escaramuza charra, the only women's equestrian event in charrería, the national sport of Mexico akin to rodeo. During the event, eight women perform a routine of highly skilled maneuvers on horseback with military-like precision. They wear matching sombreros and layered dresses that have wide-ruffled skirts embroidered with flowers. The result is beautiful to behold—but don't let the aesthetics of the tradition obscure the grit and fearlessness it requires.

That message is at the heart of a new exhibition at the National Cowgirl Museum in Fort Worth, Soldaderas to Amazonas: Escaramuzas Charras. Through photography, poetry and textiles, the

exhibition highlights the skilled female horseback riders, or charras, who participate in the male-dominated world of charrería.

This is the first time the Cowgirl Museum has hosted an exhibition exclusively focused on charrería, says Associate Executive Director Diana Vela, who curated the display. "We are about cowgirls," she says. "These charras are cowgirls."

On view through May 11, 2025, the exhibition first takes visitors through the origin of the equestrians' traditional outfits, which are inspired by the fearless women who fought in the Mexican Revolution, often referred to as *adelitas* or *soldaderas*. The word "escaramuza" means "skirmish"—a callback to when women horseback riders would run in circles to send dust into the air to confuse approaching enemies.

The charras' competition dresses pull many elements from *adelita* dresses, like skirts that fall mid-boot and have detailed floral or geometric embroidery. At competitions, the uniforms are checked to ensure they meet strict regulations. Saddles also must meet certain standards. All charras use sidesaddles, or *albardas*, which keep both legs to one side of the horse. "These

are very skilled equestrians," Vela says. "This is about much more than the dress."

Escaramuza charra was invented in Mexico in the 1950s but didn't become a recognized competitive event until 1992. Over the last few decades, the sport has gained popularity in the U.S., where there are now more than 100 teams. Each year, the teams battle it out to win a coveted spot at the national competition in Mexico.

Unlike in Mexico, there isn't a lot of sponsorship money that goes into the sport in the U.S. Many teams hold raffles to raise money for the expensive sport's demands, like clothing, horse care, and travel. When teams travel to other states or Mexico to compete, they often borrow or rent horses. This only makes competitions more challenging since the horses don't know the routines and don't have pre-established relationships with the riders.

A second gallery at the Cowgirl Museum spotlights the women on these U.S. teams. Fort Worth-based photographer Constance Jaeggi spent the last year traveling around states like Texas, Colorado, Washington, Illinois, and California to photograph escaramuza charra teams. The result is a series of portraits called *Escaramuza, The Poetics of Home*.

Jaeggi said she wanted to avoid objectifying the athletes. "All the women are confronting the camera," Jaeggi says. "I wanted it to feel empowering rather than how women have historically been photographed, kind of averting the gaze, looking away." Some of the photos show women riding along the horizon. "Historically, you could argue, the landscape has been the domain of the white, privileged male, but in these portraits, you have Mexican American women—first-, second-, third-, fourth-generation Americans—who are owning this landscape."

(Continued on next page)

Emergency Siren Signals

Cities of both Bronte and Robert Lee

1 Long Ring - Wind Advisory over 60 mph

2 Rings - Fire or VFD Meeting

Another 2 Ring - Call for Additional Firefighters

3 Rings - Tornado Warning

1 Long Continuous Ring - All Clear for Tornado

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