

Texas Hill Country Pod History

The idea for a Texas Hill Country Pod began at the Texas Ladies State Championship in April of 1993, when after a few beers, Jim Stateczny and George Jowers decided that there was a need for a pod in the hill country area northwest of San Antonio. So, following the example of Ray King who was starting the Alamo Area Pod, they proceeded to go around and collect five dollars from anyone who wanted to join the Pod. The first meeting was held in August around the pool at Curtis and Mary Heinen's house. Officers elected for that first year were: Great Pepper - Jim Stateczny, Pepper Popper - George Jowers, Secretary - Shirley Stateczny, and Treasurer - Bob Wisdom. The Pod was officially seated at the Great Peppers Meeting that September.

Our first order of business was to plan a pod cookoff for the first weekend in December at the Kendall County Fairgrounds in Boerne. The cookoff was a great success, and we also enjoyed building a float and participating in the Boerne night time Christmas parade. Our charity was the Kendall County Literacy Council which helps adults and children with reading and language problems.

Through the eleven years of our existence, we have had five people serve as Great Pepper: Jim Stateczny - 2 years, Shirley Stateczny - 2 years, Sue Ann Greive - 3 years, John Goforth - 2 years, and Steve Nadeau - 2 years. Over these years our pod has grown in membership and activities. We have held monthly meetings at various restaurants in Boerne, Kerrville, and Comfort. Currently, we are meeting at the Horseshoe Pub and Pizza in Comfort, and whose owners, Dennis and Mickey are great supporters of chili and charities.

Our Pod Cookoff in December has grown over the years, and changed location a couple of times. The first four years, we continued to have the cookoff at the fairgrounds in Boerne in conjunction with Oma's Christmas Fair. We also continued participating in the Christmas Parade, for which our float won "Grand Prize" the fourth year. Also, during these first years, we began a wonderful relationship with Ancira GMC & Motorhomes. Albert de la Garza, the general manager, began donating raffle and goody bag items and paid for our beautiful pottery trophies we have made each year. They have become great friends of our pod and of CASI. Our fifth year, we decided to move to a new location because of Fair Association politics. In the little town of Waring, just about 8 miles north of Boerne, we found a new home at the VFD hall and grounds. During the next six years of the cookoff, we added a bean cookoff, a green chili cook-off, a Christmas decorating contest, and the now famous "Soup-off" and potluck on Saturday night. Everyone enjoyed the music, card games, dominoes, and food in the heated hall each night. This past year we decided to hold the cookoff once again at the fairgrounds in Boerne. Even with the cold weather, we had the largest number of cooks ever (74). Our charities over the years have been the Literacy Council, Family Services, Books for Kids, the Waring VFD, and the CASI scholarship fund.

The last two years, the pod has participated in the "Christmas in Comfort" parade on the Saturday evening after Thanksgiving. Both years we have won the "Best Music" award. Jim Stateczny played his keyboard while the rest of the crew sang and rang their SAP-CASI bells. They lost a few of their clangers along the parade route, but luckily no one was injured!

The pod over the years has helped with several other cookoffs in the beautiful Texas hill country. Two of our favorites are the Hermann Sons Retirement Home Cookoff and the Horseshoe Pub Cookoff. At the Hermann Sons Cookoff, the folks who live at the retirement home really get involved with the cookoff by donating raffle items (many handmade), helping with

registration - Tubby, Mary, and Eva (pod members, also), and enjoying the Friday night dance. The two charities that the Horseshoe Pub Cookoff supports really get out and help with the cook-off. The kids from the Comfort Youth Baseball go out and sell raffle tickets before the cookoff, and the Senior Citizens Center has handmade items and baked goods for sale. The Friday and Saturday night parties are always fun at the Pub, and the auction Saturday afternoon is wonderful.

Back in 1997 at Terlingua, as several of us, including Albert from Ancira, were enjoying the Houston Pods' party, it was suggested that we should have a central Texas party the next year. Members of the Hill Country Pod, Highland Lakes Pod, and SAP-CASI all thought this was a great idea, especially when Albert said that Ancira would donate \$500 towards our expenses. In 1998 we held our first Central Texas Happy Hour with four pods participating as hosts, and the rest was history! Since that first year, we have grown to seven pods and several businesses and individuals sponsoring and hosting the party. The beverages are flowing, the tables are loaded with wonderful appetizers, and Ancira usually has a motorhome available for tours. The Hill Country Pod is very proud to be one of the organizers and sponsors of this annual party.

Our pod has grown in membership over the eleven years since we were first organized. We have members from all over the state and country, but our local members are the backbone of our pod. We also have many pod members from other areas who are always willing to do any job asked of them at a cookoff. We send out a monthly pod newsletter which we hope is both informative and entertaining. We also have a pod website, <http://www.texashillcountrypod.com> with current events and great pictures from Steve Nadeau. The Texas Hill Country Pod will continue to support CASI, cookoffs, charity, and all its wonderful members for many years to come.

Addendum to Texas Hill Country Pod History - March 2010

We are now in our 17th year and still going strong. Since 2004 when the original history was written, we have had 3 more Great Peppers - James Gillen, 2 years, Jim Stateczny, 2 years, and Debbie LaLanne who is in her second year. We continue to support several cookoffs in the hill country area, along with putting on our Pod cookoff in Waring. The Texas Hill Country Pod has volunteered to host the 2011 Great Peppers Meeting in Kerrville. We are very proud of our pod's accomplishments, and we continue to try and recruit new members and spread the word about CASI.