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Planning For The Next Season

by: Todd Breland

First quarter of 2022 planning has begun. It's hard to believe in the blink of an eye the calendars will turn. What's on our plates for next year?

In many aspects, we've already entered holiday season 2021 and planning for at least January through March has our attention. The balancing act of finishing this year strong while having a 2022 game plan for our organizations and businesses puts us in multiple directions simultaneously. But that's nothing new, right? Business leaders live for the pressures that challenge our multitasking abilities.

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Let us know what fellow Valley business leaders need to know. Connect with us at info@valleybusinessreport.com, and we'll do our best to profile local industries, businesses and entrepreneurs who are making great things happen in our four counties.

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Bridal Show Heralds Return To Celebrations

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

The marquee on the old State movie theater announced a new event playing.

“Bridal Show 2021,” the sign announced alongside Texas Avenue in downtown Mercedes.

The movies may be long gone at the State, but there’s new life inside the former movie house and the adjoining First National Bank building. The two historic Mercedes buildings now house Jose’s Cafecito Courtyard & Catering. On a late August evening as summer waned and fall weddings called, the Cafecito was set up for one of the first bridal shows of the year in the Rio Grande Valley.

It was a long time coming for the Cafecito’s owner, Janie Rodriguez, who worked for days with her staff to set up the event. Twenty-five brides looking forward to their big day registered for the event, as did a dozen vendors, who were eager to get back into the swing of wedding planning.

The Mercedes event was an indication of things winding back to normal.



Katheryn Ramirez of LAB Pro Studios was one of 12 vendors at the recent bridal show in Mercedes. (VBR)



The State’s old marquee announces Bridal Show 2021 in Mercedes. (VBR)

“Brides need to feel special again,” said Julie Valbuena, a manager at David’s Bridal of McAllen. “We’re excited to get invited to an event like this one. It’s wonderful to see everyone here after everything was shut down last year.”

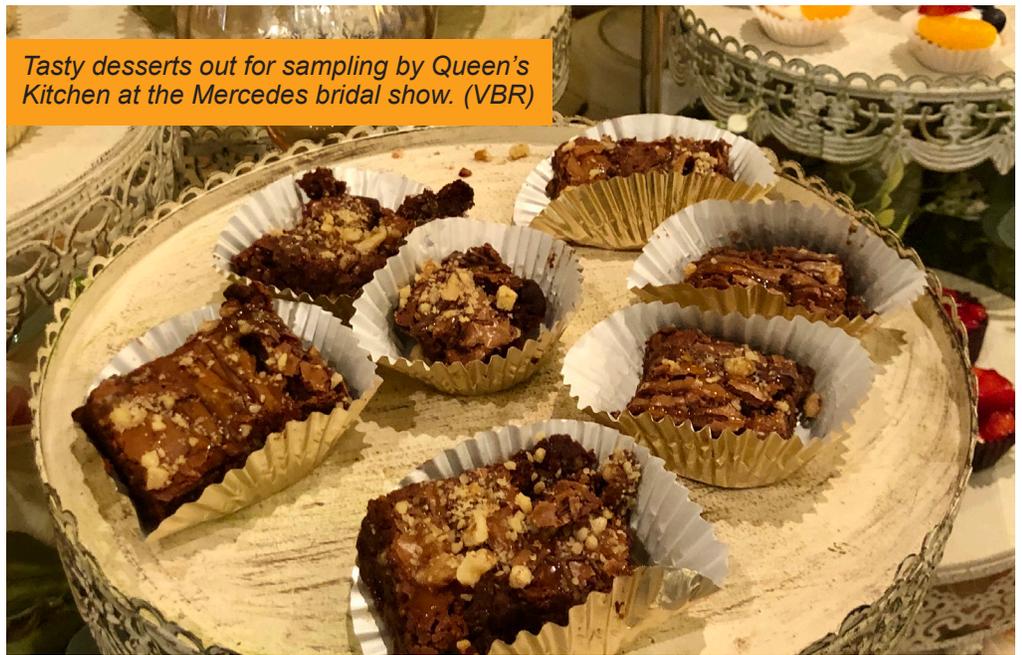
Celebrating Again

Katheryn Ramirez had her cosmetic and makeup display stylishly arranged next to the David’s Bridal setup.

She was representing LAB PRO Studios of Edinburg. Ramirez spoke of the “need to find balance” where people can enjoy public events like weddings again while taking the proper precautions to protect their health.

“People need to celebrate precious moments,” said Ramirez, a manager at LAB PRO. “We’re finding a new normal and we’re in the middle of it.”

For Ramirez, the bridal show in Mercedes



Tasty desserts out for sampling by Queen’s Kitchen at the Mercedes bridal show. (VBR)



David’s Bridal of McAllen meets with prospective brides at the Bridal Show 2021 in Mercedes. (VBR)



Jose’s Cafecito Courtyard had tables elaborately decorated at a recent bridal show. (VBR)

was an important step forward.

“It signifies a little bit of progress,” she said. “We’re excited to be here and we’ll see where it leads. We’ll do anything we can to support our community.”

Business Solidarity

There was a feeling of solidarity among the small business owners at the Mercedes event.

Helping each other out through tough times was a theme heard between meetings with the prospective brides.

“It has been challenging for sure,” said Yesenia Garcia, who works for Jose’s Cafecito and worked with vendors attending the bridal show. “We feel like we’re here for each other as small businesses. To go this long without an event like this, that’s a long time for a small business like ours.”

Garcia’s boss, Ms. Villarreal, agreed with that assessment. The business owner had her food items prepared and set up in hopes of getting catering business for an upcoming wedding.

“We need people to taste our food again,” Villarreal said. “We’re doing what we usually do. It feels good to be doing it again.”



Jose’s Cafecito Courtyard in Mercedes is looking forward to hosting a number of celebrations and events in the coming months. (courtesy)

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Going Golden With A Brownsville Boutique

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

Everything is coming up golden for Iselle Perez.

It shows in her smile and a new boutique gaining a footing in Brownsville. Golden Girl Boutique is tucked next to the Vermillion, an iconic Brownsville restaurant and watering hole she co-owns with her husband, George.

Golden Girl is Iselle's enterprise. It's a business she launched in spring 2020. Those were perilous months to start anything new given all of the public health concerns that arose at the time. She nonetheless felt a burst of energy to do something during a time when so much came to a standstill.

Perez found an outlet for that energy in discovering a niche amid the business slow-downs. She set out to deliver fashion to the front doors of professional women participating in Zoom calls and other virtual platforms. The need to look good and feel good did not diminish even if there were fewer in-person meetings.

"Business women and professional women were spending more time in front of cameras with Zoom," Perez said. "You want to look good."

To meet that need in Brownsville, Perez began delivering blouses, dresses and gym clothes in styles that appealed to her. "Casual chic," is her description of what she likes. Perez was confident other women would also find the style appealing. They did.

It wasn't long before Perez's sense of style and comfort wear for active women balancing work and family was resonating in Brownsville. Her budding business operation was making dozens of one-day deliveries throughout the city. Each article of clothing was steamed, pressed and put in plastic coverings. Touchless delivery was hung on front doors, with a picture taken and text messages sent to customers to make them aware their selection had arrived.

"What gave me confidence is that they trusted me," Perez said. "Many women didn't feel comfortable going to stores. They wanted to buy from someone local, someone they knew."

Making Gains

It was midway through 2020 and with the rush of starting her fashion-on-the-go, Perez felt a need to pause a bit and reflect on her business.

It was going well, but she still felt a need to reassess and evaluate.

"I had started this quickly," Perez said of the business. "Now I had to figure out what I was going to do with it."

She got a better sense of what to order and when to do it so she would not stack up too much inventory. Perez refined those procedures while continuing to hone the fashion styles driving her business. She added shoes and accessories to her offerings. As the months passed and her business kept growing, Perez began to realize that the connection the Vermillion had built with its custom-

ers was developing at her new enterprise.

"We created a community over there," she said. "We're doing the same thing here."

Adding A Major Piece

The next step was to open a physical storefront.

Golden Girl Boutique opened in early September 2021. It's in a cozy corner, a sweet spot right by Expressway 77, just across a large parking lot from Venture X. Walk into Golden Girl and you will experience a bright and elegant place with splashes of the owner's favorite color.



Iselle Perez opened her boutique in Brownsville in early September 2021. (VBR)

Gold ornaments dot the interior of the store along with inspirational sayings framed in gold, with one saying, “Look good, feel good, do good.”

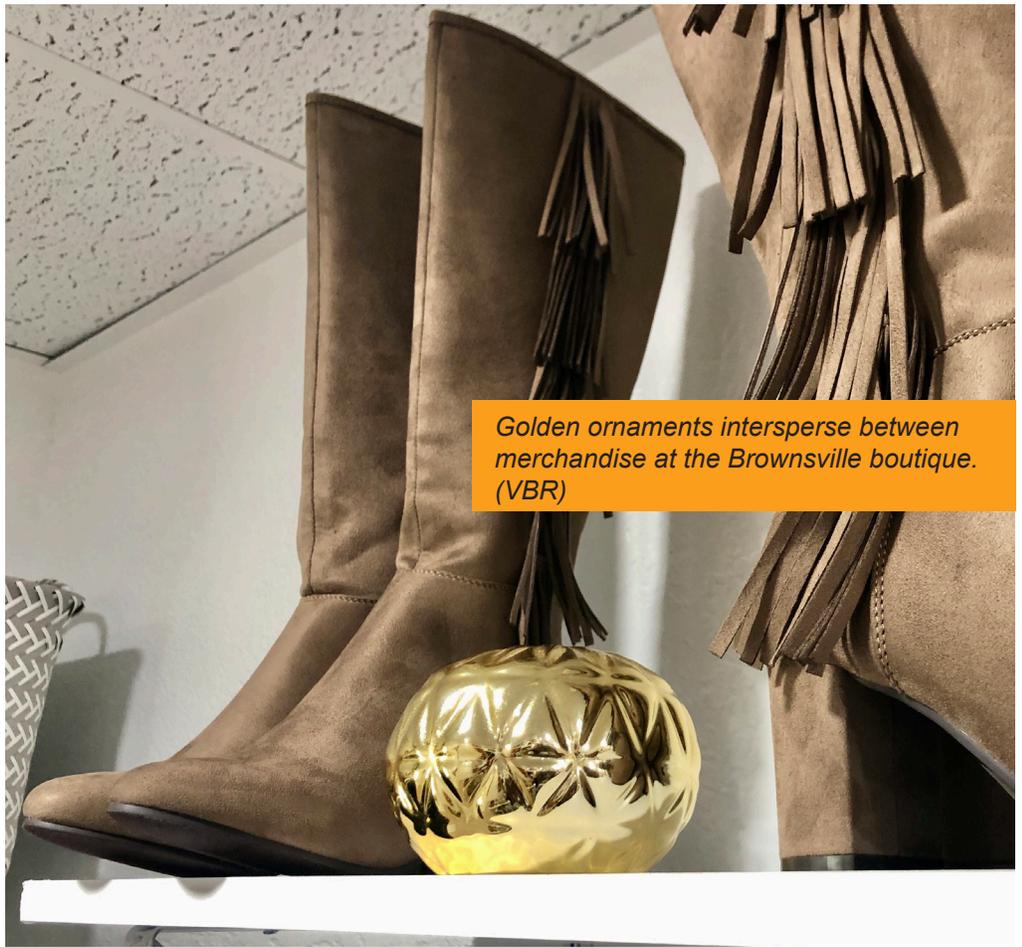
“It has done a lot for us,” Perez said of her new boutique. “They (customers) can come in here and touch and feel, which is still very important.”

Perez describes her store as a place where a woman can relax while taking her time making purchases. Glasses of champagne are also offered to Golden Girl’s customers as they browse the boutique.

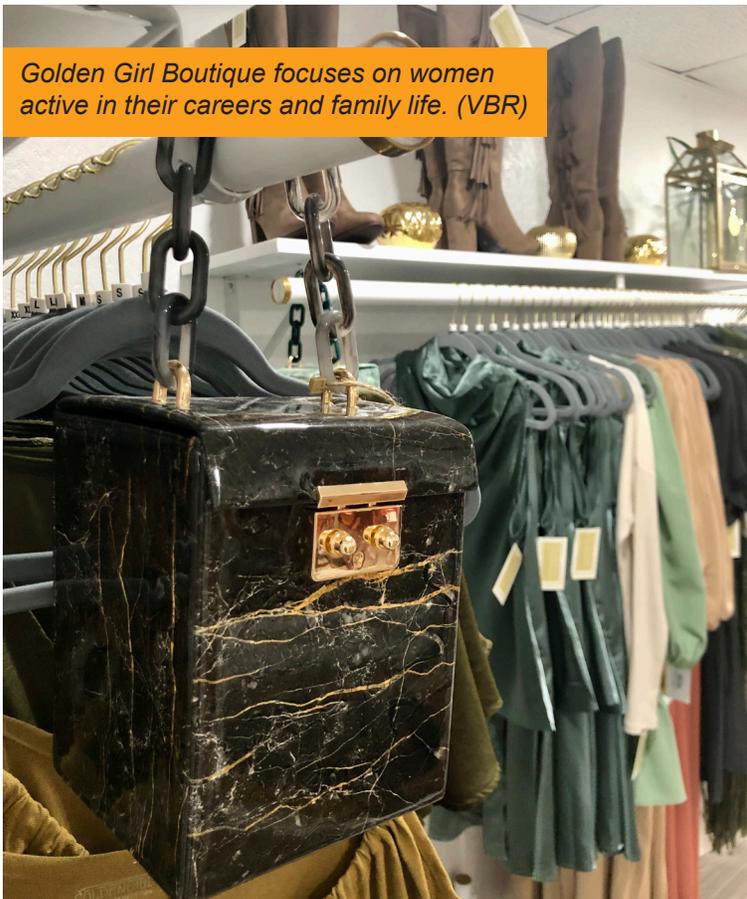
“Shopping in a boutique is more mindful, more local,” she said. “It’s a safe, positive space. Our customers want to be more alone in making decisions. They don’t want a sales person following them around.”

From here, the golden girl who started her own boutique seeks to firmly establish her boutique while developing online sales and continuing the one-day deliveries in Brownsville. There’s another role she envisions. Perez would like to make home visits and make recommendations to her customers in aligning their clothing and wardrobe to the reality of the lives they’re leading.

“We do real life, real fashion,” she said with the smile of a happy entrepreneur. “We’re here for them.”



Golden ornaments intersperse between merchandise at the Brownsville boutique. (VBR)



Golden Girl Boutique focuses on women active in their careers and family life. (VBR)



Earrings are among the accessories at the Golden Girl Boutique. (VBR)

Mercato Brings Euro-Style Look To Brownsville

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

The intersection of FM 802/Ruben Torres and Expressway 77 is among Brownsville's busiest corners.

An old school filling station with gas pumps and cars jacked up on lifts stood on that location for years. Even as Sunrise Mall's renovation and rebirth loomed behind it, the 1970s-era gas station lingered, a holdout to the past with new developments all around it.

The pressure to sell such a coveted corner of real estate finally prevailed with the old Exxon on 802 being converted to a stylish European-style version of the American convenience store. Mercato & Company with its green walls and exterior artwork bills itself as "a Euro-style on-the-go fueling stop."

It is indeed that with functioning gas pumps adjoining a busy expressway running just west of the store. The high-end store is also – in the words of a company executive – a "new spot that can attract a more curated pallet."

It's the description from Arlene Ventura, who oversees production selection and social media

strategies for the Houston-based company that opened Mercato. She is the wife of Ricardo Valatini, the company's primary owner. Ventura's pick of products includes a wide variety of items made by Rio Grande Valley companies. Chocolates and cilantro sauces made in Brownsville are on the store's shelves along with Rio Red grapefruit jelly from Harlingen.

"Some of our (local) products have big followings, but they don't always have enough venues," Ventura said. "Now people can come to our store and support their local vendors. We're giving them a platform to sell."

Connecting To Community

The local connections are important ones for Mercato.

Juan Palmada, Mercato's business development director, estimates that up to 60 percent of what's stocked at the store comes from local and state sources. Willie Nelson-branded cookies and bottles of South Texas honey blend in with fine cheeses and wines that are imported

from Europe and South America.

"It's a big part of the concept to include and celebrate local products," Ventura said. "It says we're here as part of the community."

Mercato opened in mid-June as the first of its kind Euro-style store in the Valley. Picture a convenience store with a more artful and elegant presence with imported wines to go with chocolates and chips. Palmada said the store's concept and look fits in well with Brownsville's new SpaceX-flavored vibe.

"We wanted to enhance the quality of the convenience store in the U.S.," he said. "People coming to Brownville are looking for something like this. It's a good fit and it's good for the community. Brownsville is a very dynamic place right now."

Warm Welcome

Palmera and Ventura have been heartened by the local welcome their business has received. Mercato's customers cut across all age ranges, they said, with plenty walking in just to take



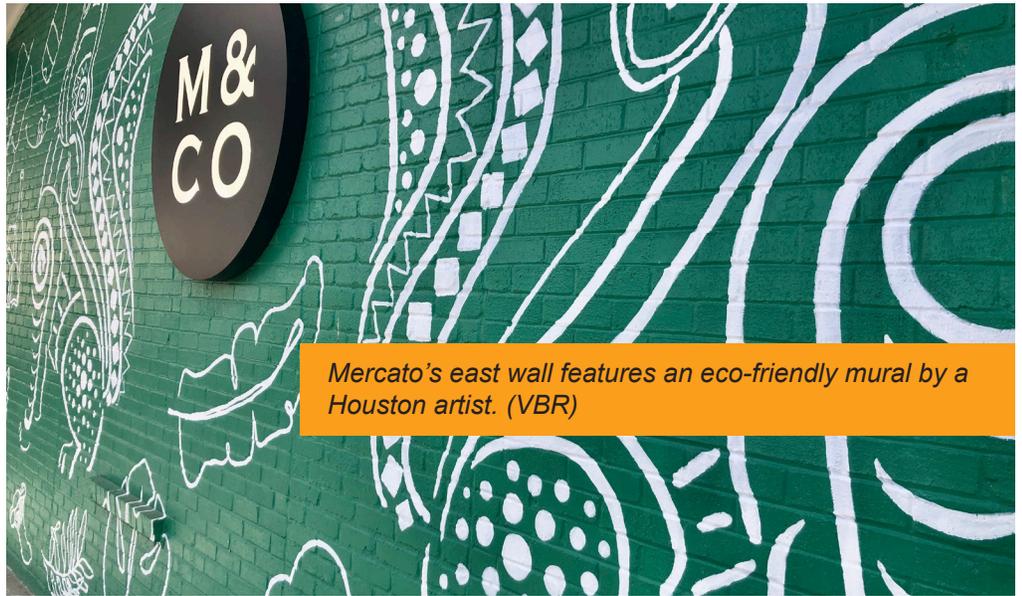
a look at a store with a different concept and distinctively different look from the typical American convenience store.

“We’ve had the community embrace us,” Ventura said. “There are companies across the city that are transforming Brownsville. We believe we’ve stepped forward to be one of them.”

The company is scouting the Valley to add another location, Palmera said. Wherever that may be it will get the same splash of exterior art as the Brownsville store features. A Houston artist painted an eco-friendly mural of leaves and wine bottles on Mercato’s south wall.

“A clean look and feel with clear colors,” is how Palmera described it.

It is that and worth a look on the corner of 802 and the expressway.



Mercato’s east wall features an eco-friendly mural by a Houston artist. (VBR)



Cilantro sauce from Brownsville is featured on the refrigerated shelves at Mercato. (VBR)

Nana's Uses Faith To Build Success

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

Looking at Nana's Taqueria today with its multicolored courtyard, well-stocked gift shop and cozy restaurant filled with patrons, you would never guess how it all got started.

Eight tables in a small room, a husband-and-wife team, one employee and an immigrant family struggling to find their footing in a new country.

It's a story that has taken 12 years to build – and it's still going strong.

Roxanna Trevino recently recounted that story and sat where it all got started. It's in one wing of what's now a restaurant with several pieces to it. Nana's beginnings didn't take up much space. A few hundred customers will visit Nana's on a busy night these days. When Trevino and her husband, Alfredo, began the business in 2009, they were happy if they could attract a dozen paying patrons.

Their Weslaco restaurant name is the nickname of one of their four daughters. It features great food and a festive atmosphere. Nana's also gives the feel of eating in a Mexican border restaurant but with a Rio Grande Valley address. Nana's success on FM 1015 has been hard earned. There were crushing business debts to overcome early on. A flood visited in recent years, threatening their gains. Then more recently, Roxanna had to confront a serious health concern.

The Trevinos remained unbowed.

"It's the American dream, that's what I tell my employees," Trevino said. "But you've got to fight for it."

Bringing Lonches To RGV

Trevino and her husband are natives of Nuevo Progreso, Tamaulipas. It's just across the Rio Grande from its similarly named sister city on the U.S. side.

They moved to Weslaco in 2009 with their four young daughters after deciding Nuevo Progreso was no longer a safe place to live due to drug trafficking-related violence at the time. They took a piece of their hometown with them.

"Lonches," Roxanna said of the Mexican-style sandwiches stuffed with cabbage, tomatoes, avocado, cilantro and the meat of choice wedged between warm bolillo rolls. "Lonches are a Progreso thing."

Nana's would make them a Weslaco thing, too.



Roxy Trevino and her mother, Roxanne Trevino, are part of the family group which owns and operates Nana's Taqueria. (VBR)

Tourists that had long enjoyed the lonches in Nuevo Progreso could now have the real thing in the Valley on FM 1015. It turned out that the lonches Alfredo and Roxana had known their whole lives would be the family’s meal ticket in the United States. She concedes the restaurant niche they found was done out of necessity. It was a need “to do something to make a living.”

“We started from zero,” she said.

And then when they had reached solvency, gotten out of debt and looked to be on firm ground, a devastating flood hit in late June a few years back. Roxanna recalled seeing “our chairs floating” and coming to tears in seeing the disaster.

“A video from our restaurant made the national news,” she said. “Some of our Winter Texan customers saw it and called us. ‘Are you doing, OK?’”

They would be, eventually, just another challenge to overcome.

Having Faith

The Nana’s story can be told in stages.

Five years after the start in the one room with the eight chairs, the business expanded. An indoor restaurant area is currently filled daily with customers. The added restaurant space also happened to be the former Trevino family residence. The business would later spring forward dramatically with a major advance.

A courtyard filled with colors, tables, live music on many nights, and an elaborate gift shop of Mexican curios and jewelry has emerged to become a Nana’s signature. Weddings, bridal showers, photo shoots and all types of Mexican holidays are celebrated with mariachi and folklorico music. It all fills the air many nights at Nana’s courtyard. Having fun and being festive blends right in with great food.

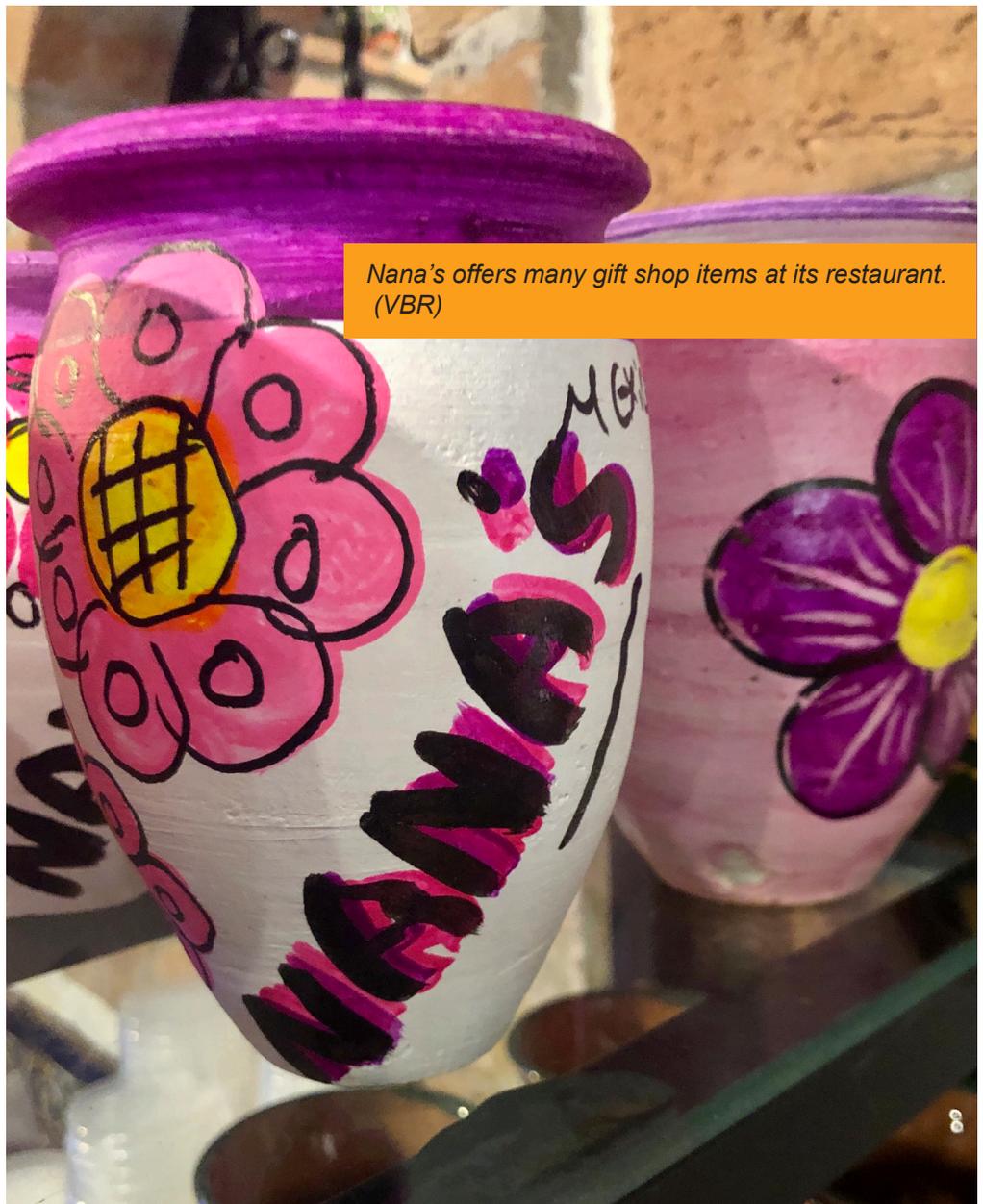
“You can come here and feel like you’re in Mexico,” Roxanna said. “We try to incorporate the culture into what we do here.”

The Trevino family is looking to open a second restaurant, with the choices being McAllen or Harlingen. Two of their Texas A&M University-educated daughters are now involved in the business. The Nana’s menu will be expanded in the coming months beyond their traditional lonches and taquitos menu.

“It’s a matter of having faith and a good attitude,” said Trevino, who has drawn on both qualities in dealing with a serious health issue in the last year. “You keep moving forward, with the support of your family and your employees.”



Lonches and other food items are fresh from Nana’s kitchen in Weslaco. VBR)



Nana’s offers many gift shop items at its restaurant. (VBR)

Engineer Finds New Challenge With Threads

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

Threads of yellow and white are wound tight in spools on roll holders leaning left in long lines.

Haresh Sachi can see it all through the windows of his office, a view of a factory floor at a manufacturing facility a block from Expressway 77 in Harlingen. He has undergraduate and graduate degrees in textile engineering to go with years of real-world experience.

He enjoys taking on challenges. Sachi found one in Harlingen in the form of a longstanding industrial thread manufacturing company. It was struggling financially when he acquired it in recent years. The entrepreneurial engineer had a new project in his sights.

“I like to keep myself on the edge,” Sachi said. “I have the knowledge and experience to turn companies around. This for me is a very good challenge.”

Sachi is president of PolySachi Polymers, the parent company of a handful of industrial companies he owns in Harlingen. One of them is Texas Threads on Wilson Road, a stone’s toss away from the expressway. The textile company manufactures a wide variety of threads used for everything from arts and crafts to bullet-proof vests.

“Texas Thread, Texas Made, Texas Tough,” says a poster in Sachi’s office.

Walking around his factory floor, looking



Haresh Sachi is president of PolySachi Polymers. (VBR)



Industrial threads help make bullet proof vests and firefighter uniforms. (VBR)

over his inventory and talking to his employees, Sachi is right where he wants to be in his manufacturing and business career.

“I do it for the fun,” he said. “If it was just about the money, I would have stayed where I was.”

Seeing Opportunities, Not Failures

Sachi came to Harlingen from Taylor, a Central Texas community where he also operated and owned businesses.

Harlingen appealed to him because of its proximity to Mexico. The majority of the products made at his local facilities go south. Textile and industrial thread manufacturing are rare in Texas. The majority of the industry that’s still in the United States is found east of the Mississippi, he said.

Those are larger-scale operations that manufacture in much larger volumes. Sachi said his Harlingen facilities can move more nimbly while also more readily customizing orders to specific needs of their customers.

“You want to find a niche,” he said.

One of his plant managers, John Fornal, said that is among Sachi’s strengths. He said his



Industrial threads have a wide variety of uses in the manufacturing process. (VBR)



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boss has a great eye for finding opportunities in a tough field.

“This is not the type of business you find on every corner,” Fornal said. “His niche is seeing potential where everyone else sees failure.”

Threads Fill Many Needs

“Anything you don’t use on your body.”

That’s how Sachi defines industrial textiles.

The list is long as to what industrial threads are used for in the manufacturing process. The wraps and liners in food packaging utilize the refined and bonded threads from Sachi’s facilities. So do nylon products, bags, shoes and awnings. Industrial threads are also needed to make a flame-resistant material in firefighter uniforms.

Sachi’s Harlingen plans include making investments to bring in new equipment along with updating technology and growing factory capabilities to include more mass production. Beyond products and machinery, employees like Fornal are grateful to Sachi for coming to Harlingen and providing new opportunities.

“He saved jobs,” Fornal said of coming to Harlingen. “He brings people in, trains them and gives them a chance.”



Haresh Sachi plans to upgrade equipment at his Texas Threads factory in Harlingen. (VBR)



Texas Threads of Harlingen is one of few facilities of its type found west of the Mississippi. (VBR)

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Electrician Blazes New Path With Restaurant

By Chris Ardis

On Aug. 16, Marcos Silva, a college counselor for IDEA Public Schools, posted a note about his brother on Facebook.

“My brother is an electrician/builder by trade,” he wrote of Jose Silva. “After building restaurants across Texas and Oklahoma for others, he threw in his bid and made himself one.”

It’s Wing Zone Grill & Tap, which Marcos said “represents a lot more than a wing place.”

“It’s the efforts, sacrifice and fight of a man to build for himself and his family,” Marcos said of his older brother.

Jose Silva’s journey to become the owner of one of McAllen’s newest restaurants began in Reynosa, Mexico, where he lived until the age of 8. Then he and his parents moved to Mission, splitting their time between the Rio Grande Valley and Othello, Wash.

“We worked in the fields,” Silva said, “picking asparagus, cucumbers, strawberries and raspberries.”

Silva’s parents added two more sons to the family, first Luis and then Marcos. The family moved from Mission to Pharr and then to McAllen, continuing to spend half of the year in Othello.

While a student at McAllen High School, Jose had the opportunity to learn electrical skills, preparing him for his first foray into business ownership. He did not realize the importance of learning this trade until he graduated from high school in Othello.

“What am I going to do with my life?” Silva said he asked himself. “I’m not ready for college.”

Seeking A New Path

He found his family’s imperative field work “amazing,” but he had other plans. Silva decided to go to San Marcos to become certified in electrical trades.

One year later, after completing the program, he returned to McAllen and began working at Metro Electric. Silva completed the necessary hours and passed the state exam, earning him the title of licensed master electrician.

After eight years with Metro Electric, Silva decided the time had come to put his electrical expertise and his management experience to work for himself, opening All Valley Electric. He spent the next 10 years honing



Jose Silva, far right, counts his family as his greatest blessing. That includes his wife, Angeles, and his youngest brother, Marcos. (Courtesy)

his skills and leading his employees.

As he watched all of the phases of construction and remodeling while working on jobs, Silva decided to open his second small business, Faith Developers Group, a commercial construction company. FDG remodeled Burger King restaurants in Corpus Christi and San Antonio.

When COVID-19 hit, Silva had some time on his hands. He spent that time researching franchises, responding to a nagging feeling that the time had come for him to own his own restaurant.

Fulfilling A Dream

“A friend told me about Wing Zone,” Silva said, “because they have wing flavors not available in the Rio Grande Valley.”

After thoroughly researching the company and liking what he saw, Silva submitted a franchise application. The franchise owners gave the applicant an extensive background check. They asked Silva to choose a location for a new restaurant when the process was completed.

Wing Zone Grill & Tap is known for its “distinctive, crowd-pleasing flavors.” (Courtesy)



Curbside and carry-out are also available at Wing Zone in McAllen. Angus burgers are made to order and crispy onion rings are one of the restaurant’s popular sides. (Courtesy)

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“We didn’t look anywhere else but McAllen,” Silva said. “It’s our hometown.”

Ultimately, he chose a vacant building on Business 83 and 11th Street, with the iconic Chase Bank tower in the background. Over the past year, Silva, his family and his employees have completely renovated the building, combining two business spaces into one.

Silva and two members of his team spent four weeks in New Orleans for training, learning every aspect of the WZ franchise.

“After the training, I had 10 days to find employees,” he said, a difficult task in normal times, let alone in the midst of a pandemic.

The hiring began nonetheless. The WZ franchise helped by sending a corporate trainer to McAllen, along with others familiar with the business. It was an all hands-on deck approach in training Silva’s employees.

WZ McAllen opened Aug. 16 and has been serving up signature boneless wings and made-to-order Angus burgers. There’s also The Big Red, a hand-breaded chicken breast with WZ’s Hot Shot flavor. Other menu favorites are fried-fish tacos and Norwegian-salmon salads.

There are also seven buffalo flavors, five sweet-and-spicy flavors, three “sweet, no heat” flavors and three dry rubs. Popular sides are onion rings, sweet potato waffle fries, kettle chips and homemade mozzarella sticks.

There’s karaoke every Wednesday and live music Thursday-through-Saturday evenings. There’s a spacious porch for seating to go with indoor and bar accommodations. Soon, there will be a two-story VIP room, seating up to 44 people for private meetings and parties. Curbside, carry-out and catering are also available.

Jose said he feels like a student again as he continues to learn every aspect of his new business. He walks from table to table to meet his customers, making sure they have an excellent WZ experience.

The business is a family affair. Angeles, Jose’s wife, works alongside him. Their twins, Jose and Angeles, are away at college and come home to work on the weekends. Their younger son, Joshua, a student at Memorial High School, works there, too. One of their nieces is a waitress and a nephew bartends. When not at their full-time jobs, Luis

and Marcos are on site to support their older brother.

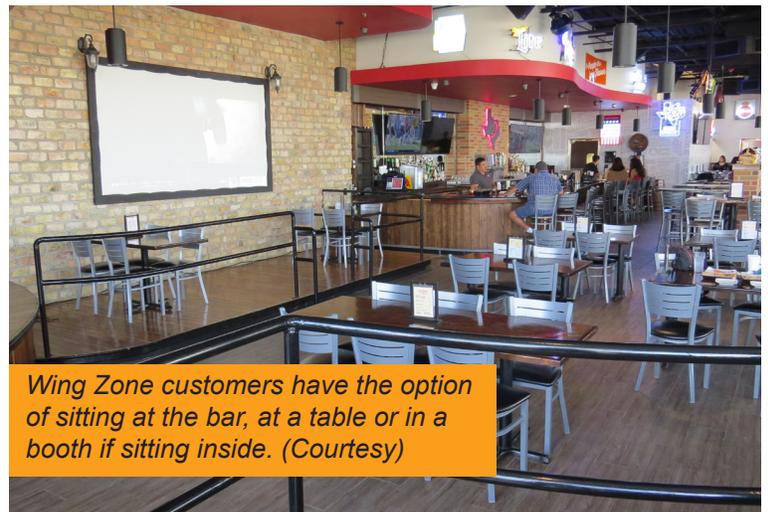
As a young man, Jose said he asked God to bless him with a car.

“I don’t need a new one,” he recalled asking in his prayer. “I just need to get to work. Now I look at how He has blessed me. I am really blessed.”

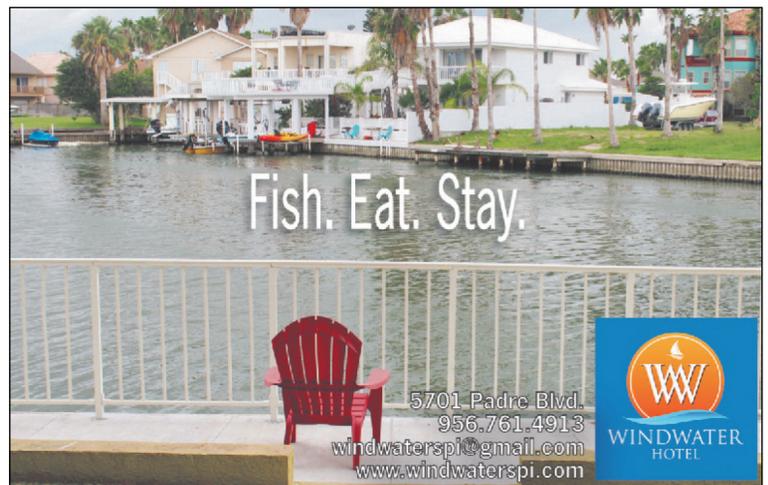
The iconic Chase Bank tower serves as a backdrop for Wing Zone Grill & Tap on Business 83 in McAllen. (Courtesy)



Jose Silva makes a point of talking to his customers, getting to know them and making sure they have an excellent WZ experience. (Courtesy)



Wing Zone customers have the option of sitting at the bar, at a table or in a booth if sitting inside. (Courtesy)



Fish. Eat. Stay.

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BROWNSVILLE AEROSPACE INDUSTRIAL PARK

Preparing for the Future of Aerospace Technology

The Brownsville Aerospace Industrial Park located at the Brownsville South Padre Island International Airport, (BRO) with its new terminal and technology in place, is looking to capture more than the passenger market. As the Aerospace Industry experiences unprecedented growth, BRO is poised to cash in on the future.

Recently, the Brownsville Aerospace Industrial Park signed SpaceX as a tenant, which is just the beginning. As part of Foreign Trade Zone #62 and easy access to Boca Chica Beach, the Port of Brownsville, the Brownsville Aerospace Industrial Park has just shy of 300 acres available for development.

Other Aerospace companies have shown interest in BRO locations as the City of Brownsville and the Brownsville Economic Development Corporation continues (GBIC) to up its game in seeking out new companies. GBIC along with CEO and Founder Dwight Thanos Smith announced in June 2021, that Paragon VTOL Aerospace would be building its manufacturing hub at the Brownsville Aerospace Industrial Park, and now the company is prepared to move to the next level. Paragon VTOL committed 50 VTOLS for urban air taxi movement to begin in Brownsville in 2025.

*For information regarding the
Brownsville Aerospace Industrial Park,
feel free to reach out to
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Special Projects Manager,*

956-543-4373

Mon. - Fri.
8 AM to 12 PM and 1 PM to 5 PM

Or email:
flybrownsville@brownsvilletx.gov
Subject: Aerospace Industrial Park Info request



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