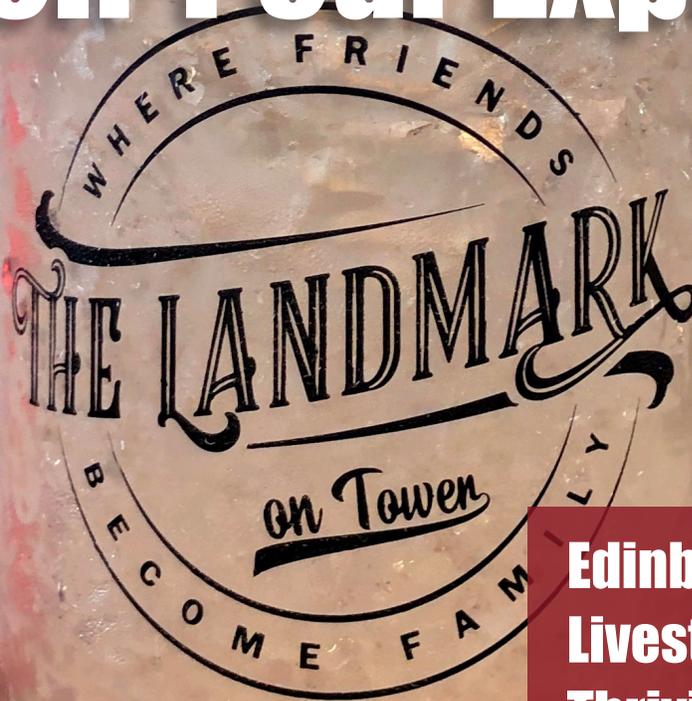


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The Self-Pour Experience

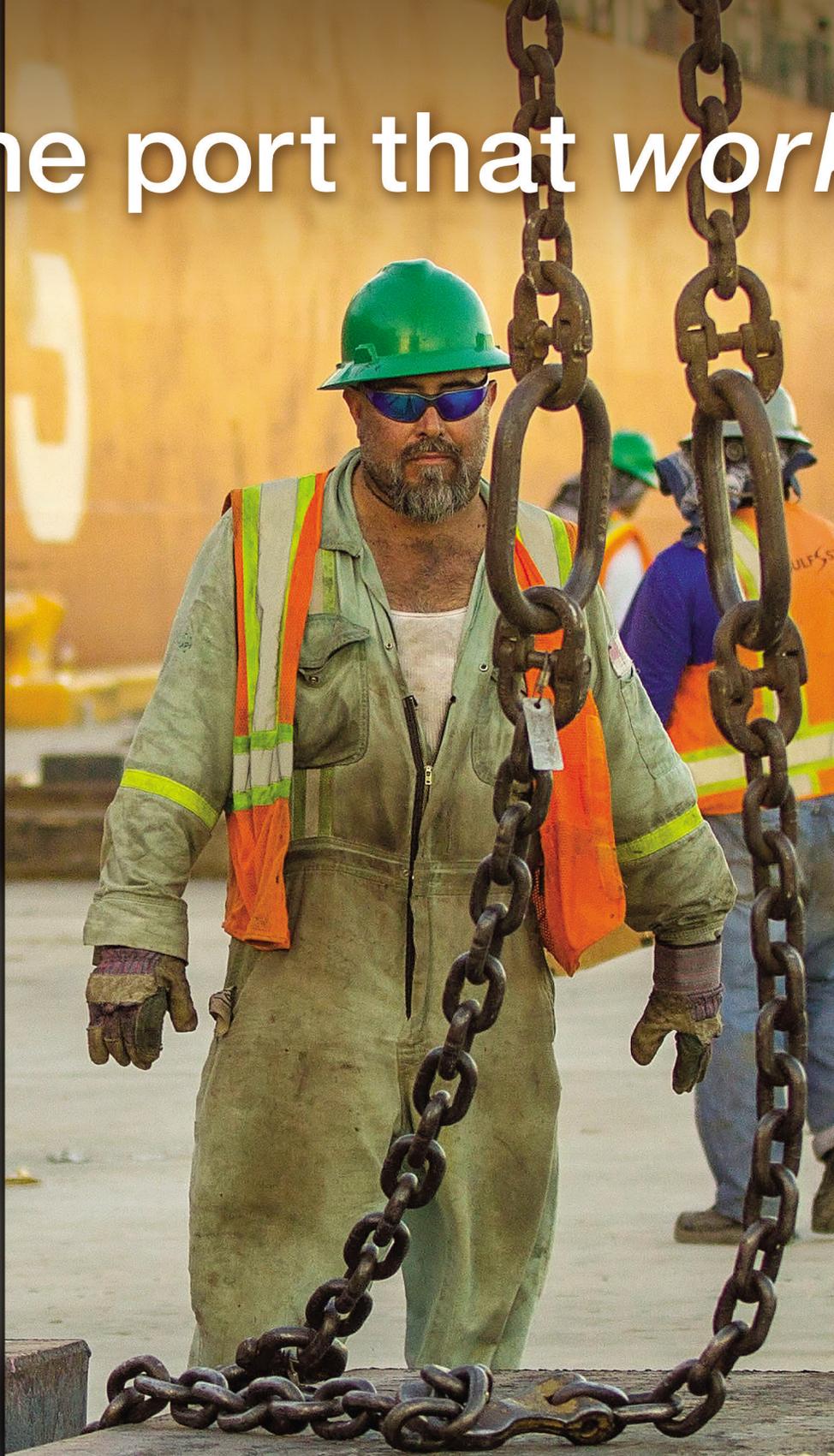


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Paying The Price

by: Todd Breland

Is quality more important than quantity? How do we value price and time?

A multitude of equations factor into our reason for products and services we buy and sell. We consider quality, convenience, availability, needs met and more. Is it a want or a need? Decisions, decisions.

Consider the products or services your company or organization manufactures, distributes or delivers. Are problems solved or wants fulfilled? What rating would you value your own finished product? Ask yourself, would you buy what you're selling.

We all want to be the best -- to provide top quality products not available anywhere else. But do we?

I think we all want to improve our products, ultimately to be recognized as the best in the business. Are we there yet? If we're honest with ourselves, there is ALWAYS room for improvement. Therefore we do our best to raise the bar, separating ourselves

from the competition, so we earn that #1 status.

The road to success has no end, but certainly has obstacles and detours. But that road also has pit stops to recharge. Are we willing to pay the price and humble ourselves to say "we're not there yet, but we will stay the course"? There is always work

to be done if we want to get the checkered flag.

Deep South Texas understands these principles of winning. We gather our troops, sweat the details and keep up the good fight. We are willing to pay the price to take our organizations to higher levels because we are the Rio Grande Valley.

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Table Of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Beer Wall	5
Creating Simple Pathways	8
Grow Fast, Grow Smart	10
The Wild Life	12
Taking Stock	14
Drip Lounge	17

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Landmark Offers Something New On Tap

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

It's a February afternoon that's warm and sunny with a crispness in the air from preceding days where overnight lows hovered around freezing.

Roy Landa is walking around the grounds of The Landmark on Tower. Traffic goes over the railroad tracks by the combination food truck park/restaurant on Tower Road in Alamo. Thick-trunked oak trees loom over green turf and stylish picnic tables. Under the old oaks, customers go through the doors of the entrance to The Landmark's indoor dining and games area. There's a wall of handles offering something not commonly seen in the Rio Grande Valley.

It's a self-serve beer wall with 24 taps, with 20 for beer choices and four for wines. The choices of beer are craft, imports and domestics with wine selections to fit every taste. A brick oven sits behind the main counter and bakes the pizzas that are the ideal side dishes to go with the range of beers and wines on tap.

There's a relaxed feel to the place. It's just as Landa intended when he opened his Alamo business last October. He wanted a venue where families could gather and bring their children to play video games inside, or where they could sit outside and watch their kids roam around on the turfed lawns leading to the food trucks. Landa wanted to recreate how he felt growing up at family gatherings of barbecues and cookouts in backyards with kids frolicking about without a care in the world.

"I don't want people to feel like it's a bar," Landa said of The Landmark. "This is a family-oriented place. I wanted somewhere that people could relax and disconnect from their phones."

The former Alamo city commissioner had one other motivation in mind when developing the site on Tower and Business 83.

"I had my community in mind," said Landa, who grew up in Alamo. "Growth here had been stagnant. I thought a place like this would add something positive for the community."

Finding A New Challenge

Landa is a multifaceted businessman and owner.

Among his real estate and restaurant holdings is Rio Grande Valley College, a school



Roy Landa was looking for a new business challenge in establishing The Landmark in his hometown. (VBR)

in Pharr that has nursing and medical support programs. He and a partner built the school from scratch to the large campus it now occupies on U.S. Highway 281, just north of the Pharr Interchange. Landa cast about for a new challenge after the school's success. He settled on a spot on the corner of Tower and Business 83.

It's an intersection with history that's both tragic and harkens back to the Valley's agricultural past. It's the site of a March 14, 1940 truck/train accident that took the lives of 34 farm workers. At the time, the accident marked the most fatalities on a Texas highway. Just adjacent to the accident site was the Crest Fruit Company. It was just one of the dozens of packing sheds and agricultural warehouses that lined Highway 83 long before the expressway was built.

Landa has a keen sense of local history. He recalls the stores and businesses he grew up going to as a child that are now gone. It was a sense of nostalgia that was an inspiration in developing the Landmark. There are various food truck parks around the Valley. Landa wanted something more even while praising the six food truck owners at the Landmark



Spacious grounds offer picnic tables, a turfed lawn and six food trucks at The Landmark in Alamo. (VBR)



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The Revolving Loan Program is just one of the incentives the Alamo Economic Development Corporation has established as part of our efforts to encourage business growth and job creation in the city. This program is designed to assist small businesses and start-ups by providing a low-cost alternative financing option.



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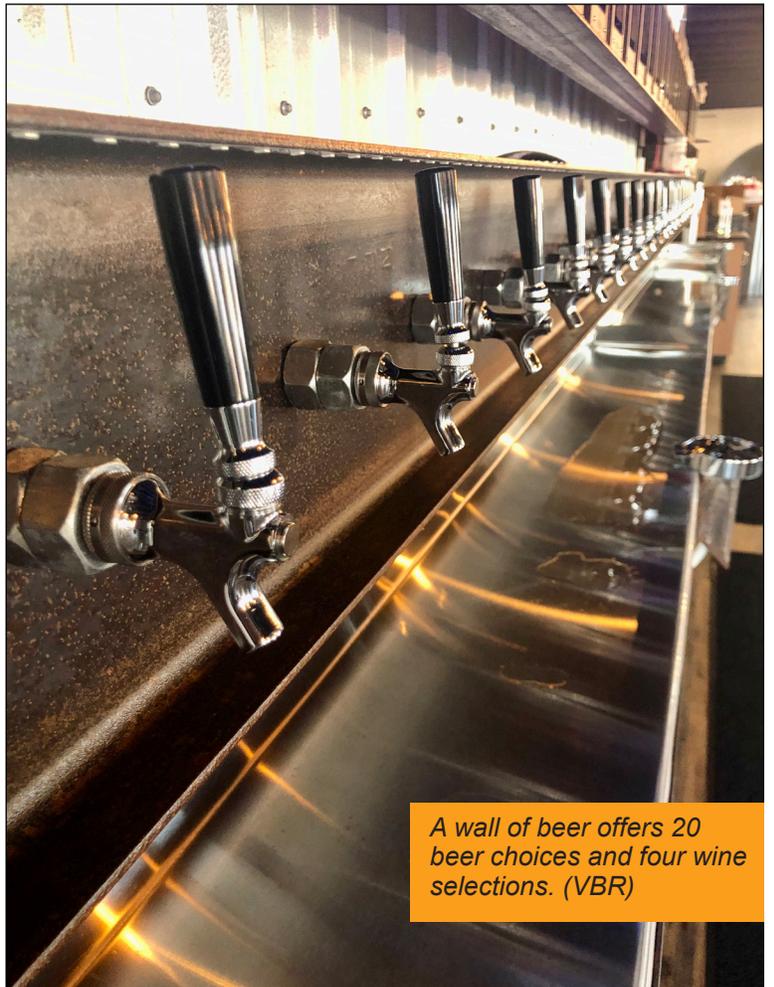
- Business must be located in Alamo.
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LOAN USES:

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LOAN TERMS

Loan terms and conditions vary depending on the project, financial need, and type of asset used as collateral. The interest rate varies between 4-10%. The typical loan is between 5-6%. The minimum loan amount is \$10,000. The maximum loan amount is \$150,000. The maximum term is 10 years.



A wall of beer offers 20 beer choices and four wine selections. (VBR)

that offer loaded tater tots, a waffle bar, burgers and hotdogs with a Mexican twist, and tacos featuring premium meats and handmade tortillas.

The beer wall fits the bill. It's what Landa calls "the self-pour experience."

Customers can go to The Landmark's main counter and be given a chilled 15-ounce mug with a bracelet that has a microchip. The latter will electronically track the beers a customer selects along with the quantity of beverages he or she is drinking to make sure that it's being kept in check. There's a range of well-known national light beer brands to go with Mexican-sourced beers. Regional beers come from the 5X5 Brewing Co. of Mission.

"You only pay for what you pour," Landa said.

Family Affair

Sitting outside on the turfed grounds, Landa has a word or two with his older brothers, David and Gilbert, who are his partners in the business venture and help to keep The Landmark looking clean and neat.

There's a stage for live music on the northern end of the property. The Landmark

is open Tuesday through Sunday from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m., and a bit later on weekends when there are larger crowds. The outdoor option is a good one right now, Landa said, for customers who may not feel comfortable with indoor public spaces.

The unique indoor/outdoor beer wall establishment with self-serve taps and food trucks on 103 N. Tower is getting its footing. In its first days of operations last October, so many people came to The Landmark that local police officers were called to direct traffic and

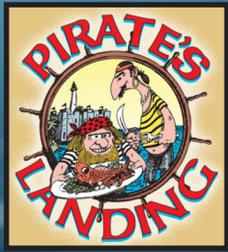
keep customers from parking on the properties of nearby residences. It's all good now and Landa believes he's onto something with a business he hopes can well serve Pharr, San Juan, Alamo and the surrounding Valley communities.

"We were always eating outside when we were growing up," he said. "I want to help bring back some of that, being outside, somewhere comfortable where you don't feel rushed and you can enjoy family and friends."



A colorful food truck at The Landmark offers loaded tots. (VBR)

Our good friends, the Friedman family, recently suffered the fire loss of Pier 19 Restaurant. We have no doubt our community will rally together & continue to support the Friedmans. #RGVstrong!



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Center Seeks To Inspire RGV Entrepreneurs

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

Md Salman Rahman's big idea involves artificial intelligence and systems which allow patients to upload an image of their medical reports.

Rahman envisions his product, HealthAI, training people with machine learning and algorithms to read the medical reports in improving their lives. It's a brilliant concept with soaring ambitions but Rahman, a UTRGV graduate student, lacked the entrepreneurial and business experience to take such a technological-heavy product to the marketplace.

Rahman's product development got a big boost from the Center for Innovation and Commercialization, which is part of the Robert Vackar College of Business at the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley. The CIC was there to help Rahman hone his ideas and see the potential of commercializing his product. He would take the guidance given by CIC to then compete in the Blackstone LaunchPad Big Idea Competition.

Once there, Rahman was successful, with Blackstone naming him one of four national grand prize winners. He lauded the CIC for its support.

"The advice was great," Rahman said in a UTRGV press release. "My strengths are mainly in research. Having the CIC's guidance truly helped me grow in my entrepreneurial and scholarly journey."

At the CIC offices in Weslaco, the director, Laurie Simmons, spoke of "creating simple pathways" for aspiring entrepreneurs like Rahman. The UTRGV graduate student in Simmons' view is clearing one big hurdle. There's a likely market for his product.

"We tell people that their time and effort are the most important things you have," Simmons said. "You don't want to waste your time and effort on something no one wants."

Leveraging Resources

Simmons launched the CIC in 2015. It was also the year that UTRGV came to be with the merger of UT-Pan American and UT-Brownsville.

The Harlingen native has a marketing and advertising background to go with being a regional director for an emerging technology center during the administration of Texas Gov. Rick Perry. She was in need of a new challenge and job after the disbanding of Perry's program when he left office. She described how she

went about "creating my next job" which could utilize her background in fundraising, marketing and working with budding entrepreneurs in building the CIC from the ground up.

Simmons and her staff work out of Mid-Valley space in an office building UTRGV leases from the city of Weslaco and its EDC. The dean of the college of business in 2015 tasked Sim-

mons with finding a location in the middle of the Valley. The challenge of funding the center began after that goal was met. Her experience with grant funding came in handy as Simmons then built up the resources to get the center going.

Seven years later, the center is in full gear with its mission. It is assisting entrepreneurs



Laurie Simmons directs the services and guidance programs provided by the Center for Innovation and Commercialization. (VBR)

with the development of ideas while accelerating their ventures toward reaching markets. The CIC also seeks to develop the next generation of Valley entrepreneurs. It offers competitions and events where students can test their business plans and projects before panels of experienced business people and professionals. The center also wants to be a gathering point of information about the growing services in “the entrepreneurial ecosystem” being offered by the university, economic development corporations and chambers of commerce.

“We want to leverage the resources that are out there,” Simmons said of the various business incubators, start-up money, low-interest loans and improvement grants offered by, among others, EDCs across the Valley. “We’re trying to demystify the process.”

Testing Ideas & Plans

The CIC has signature events that are open to UTRGV students, faculty, staff and the general public

The CIC hosts the Rafael Munguia Business Plan Competition every spring. It’s a months-long process that culminates with 10 students and 10 general category participants presenting

in person to a panel of experienced entrepreneurs, and business executives and owners. Winners then receive prizes ranging from \$500 to \$1,500.

There’s the Big Idea Competition of which Rahman competed in and was among its biggest winners. The entries must be ideas and not existing businesses currently generating revenues or receiving funding or financing of any kind. This competition also offers prizes, ranging from \$500 to \$3,000. It’s what the CIC calls “the ideation, development and acceleration of new business ventures.”

“We want to help them through their journey,” Simmons said.

For budding entrepreneurs like Rahman, the CIC is doing just that, and its successes are thus being recognized. In October 2020, the CIC received a \$1.3-million grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration to bolster its innovation and competitiveness programs. In utilizing this grant, the CIC joined with the UTRGV’s Entrepreneurship and Commercialization Center in Brownsville in working collaboratively to benefit the entire region.

“This is our region and we’ve become a very mobile region,” Simmons said. “People are

willing to travel for the resources they need. We want to help grow businesses and keep them here in the Valley.”

Entrepreneurship for All



Director Laurie Simmons leads an informational session at the Center for Innovation and Commercialization in Weslaco. (Courtesy)



UTRGV’s Center for Innovation and Commercialization is centrally located in Weslaco. (VBR)

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Edinburg's Growth Brings Excitement, Challenges

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

Ramiro Garza's calling cards in his successful mayoral run were advocating for a code of ethics and pledging to rid City Hall of conflicts of interest.

Once in office in late 2021, Garza faced another challenge as freshly released U.S. Census figures showed Edinburg grew faster than any other city in the Rio Grande Valley. The city's population in 2020 showed a 39 percent growth over the 2010 count. At its new official population of 107,438, Edinburg ranks as the 12th fastest growing city in the nation among communities with a population of 100,000 or more residents.

The new Edinburg mayor estimated that at current projections, his city will be the Valley's

second largest city by 2040. The buzz generated by the rapid growth is exciting. It also brings with it a whole set of pressing challenges. Edinburg will need more public services as well as new roadways and streets to reach growth corridors rippling through it.

"If you don't work on infrastructure, then it's going to be tough," said Garza, who is a former city manager and economic development director. "You won't be able to maintain that kind of growth without those kinds of public investments."

A New Center

For years, the east-west corridor of University Drive that meets up at courthouse square

marked Edinburg's center point.

These days, said Edinburg City Manager Ron Garza, only one third of the city lies south of the thoroughfare that runs by the University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley. Edinburg's growth to the north has been expansive over the last decade. Much of the city now runs up to Monte Cristo Road and beyond to the city's airport 15 miles north of town. Monte Cristo not long ago was on the city's northern outskirts. Garza, the city manager, said today the roadway is "a second hub."

"You want your city to grow fast and to grow smart," the city manager said. "A city just can't go without a strategy with this kind of growth."

Garza, the mayor, concurs wholeheartedly

Ramiro Garza took office as Edinburg's new mayor in December 2021 and believes the city needs a road map to set the city's growth for the next 20 years. (Courtesy)



with his city manager’s assessment. He has kicked off an initiative to devise a 2040 Vision plan that will serve as a roadmap on how Edinburg can incorporate its fast growth into policies and budgets. A town hall meeting was also held in early February to begin gathering public input into forming the plan.

The mayor knows that numbers and recommendations are largely meaningless unless they are applied into actual city life.

“There’s a lot of strategic plans out there, but you need to integrate them into the budget process,” he said. “You need to get your budget priorities aligned with your vision plan.”

Room To Grow

One of Edinburg’s greatest assets has been the amount of open land it has to grow.

That’s especially true of the city’s northern boundaries, which stretch out beyond Edinburg’s airport on U.S. Highway 281 heading out of the Valley. The new Edinburg residences

and subdivisions north of University Drive were part of the \$339 million in building and construction permits issued in 2021, a recent city press release stated. That figure was nearly double the \$164 million in permit valuations approved in 2021.

In southwest Edinburg, meanwhile, the city’s medical and hospital district is booming with the major entertainment and sports venues of the Bert Ogden Arena and the H-E-B Park located nearby. In the hospital district, the South Texas Health System is constructing a five-story, \$100-million patient tower. DHR Health is also expanding its pediatric services with construction of an eight-level hospital. Driscoll Children’s Hospital will lease and independently operate the facility.

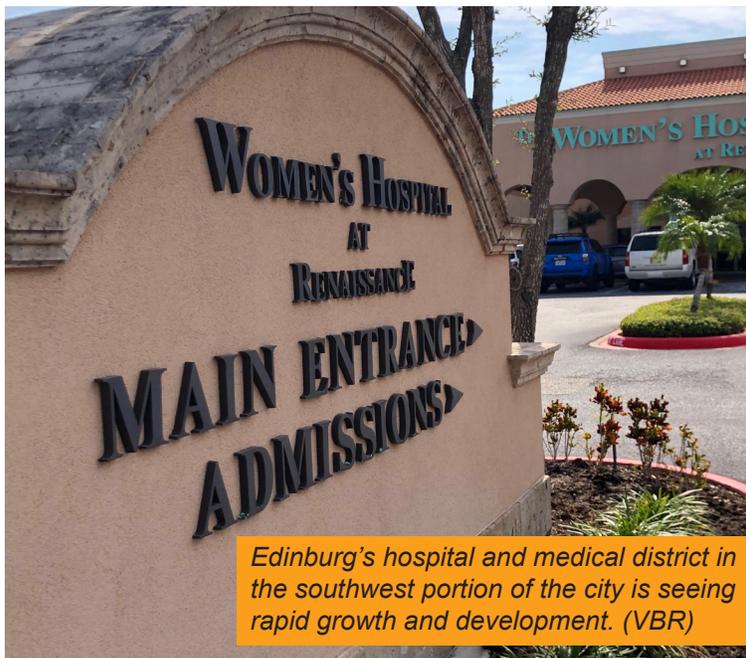
All of that growth along with its taxes and fees paid to City Hall will help fund needed improvements for new streets. It will also widen existing ones to handle the increasing volumes of traffic. Edinburg will need to boost

its public safety capabilities with additional firefighters and police officers, and purchase the equipment and vehicles they will need. Drainage, like every Valley city, is “a never-ending investment,” said Garza, the city manager.

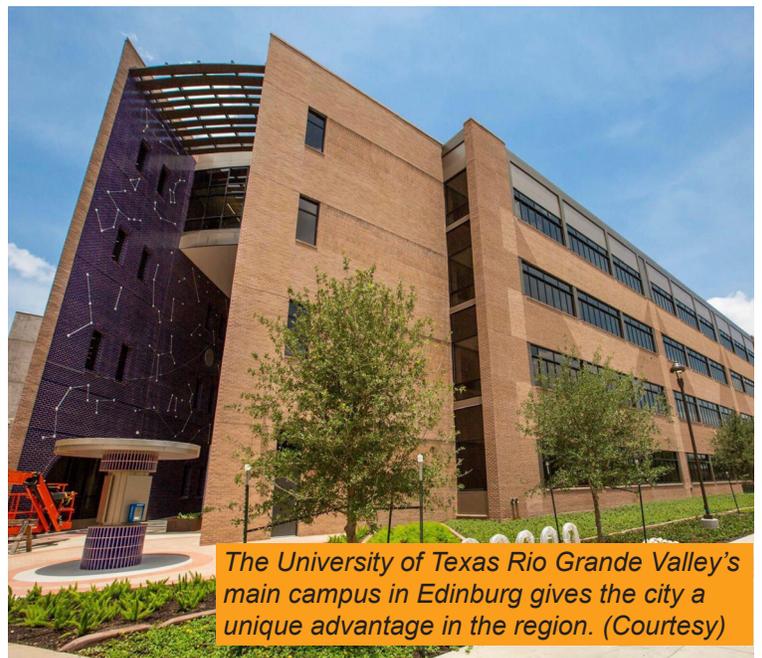
“Those are all the key ingredients,” Mayor Garza said. “Infrastructure, roads, drainage, improved mobility of traffic.”

Garza starts his first mayoral term with all of those issues at hand needing an immediate focus. He is confident his city will continue to grow “with room to spare.” Edinburg’s added advantages on top of its growth is that it’s the home of UTRGV and also the county seat, with a gleaming multi-story courthouse nearing completion in the center of town.

“Edinburg is very unique in having all of the elements of a Valley city and also having a large university,” the mayor said. “We have a really good mix of factors that I believe will continue to support Edinburg’s growth.”



Edinburg’s hospital and medical district in the southwest portion of the city is seeing rapid growth and development. (VBR)



The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley’s main campus in Edinburg gives the city a unique advantage in the region. (Courtesy)



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Firefighters Find New Life On Elizabeth Street

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

There likely has never been a store quite like Southernmost Wildlife Products in the long retailing history of Elizabeth Street in downtown Brownsville.

Photographs of yesteryear on Brownsville's historic main street show the classic department stores of Sears and JCPenney. Down Elizabeth from those mainstays are blocks of locally-owned men's and women's clothing stores, with the five-and-dime stores nearby. Those days on Elizabeth have vanished. The downtown of today does show a resurgence with historic buildings undergoing renovations, in part, with donations from the foundation of SpaceX's Elon Musk.

In the present mix is Southernmost, a fishing, outdoor and sporting goods store that's owned by three Brownsville firefighters who are utilizing a bond forged from working together while on duty to open and run a business. Downtown Brownsville would seem to be an unlikely location for fishing and hunting enthusiasts. Walk into the shop, however, and it seems to fit.

"You don't usually think about going downtown for fishing and hunting" said Roger McArdle, a firefighter of 15 years who is also a U.S. Army veteran, serving in Afghanistan and Iraq. "It is unique for us to be here, but we do bring something to this area that it didn't have before."

The building where Southernmost is located has a firefighter's connection. The fishing and hunting shop is in a firefighter's union building. Firefighters use the back half of it for union meetings. Southernmost uses the front end of the building facing Elizabeth. McArdle and his two fellow firefighters and business owners – Esteban Atkinson and Dorian Hopperstad – opened the shop last June after years of considering such a venture.

"We're all like minded," McArdle said. "We've known each for over a decade. We've been through a lot of stuff together."

Getting Started

It was Atkinson who had the initial idea of opening an outdoors and sporting good store.

A lifelong outdoorsman, he had been tinkering with a device that hunters could use while out in the field. It's a product that's still a work in progress. He envisioned perfecting it at some point, a goal he still has. He also thought if that product would be for sale, why

not at his shop?

"It morphed from if we're going to sell that to we can sell other things, too," Atkinson said.

McArdle was his first partner. The union building came up as an option for a business location. Atkinson and McArdle took their fellow firefighters up on their offer. Their business was formally incorporated in April 2021. Hopperstad came in later as a third partner.

Each one of the firefighters was looking for something outside of firefighting given the inherent risks of their jobs. They have suffered serious injuries during the rigors of putting out fires and facing other emergency situations.

"I had gone through injuries on duty," said

Atkinson, a firefighter for 16 years. "I started thinking about my future. What could I do as a fallback? I needed to have something to do after retirement."

Hopperstad in becoming an enthusiastic third partner saw the benefits of starting a fishing and hunting shop during a pandemic when the outdoor oriented are looking for safe activities.

"People still have their hobbies and need something to do," said Hopperstad, a firefighter for over two decades. "Being outdoors, hunting and fishing, is something that can be done comfortably and safely."

At their shop, the three firefighters alternate shifts between doing the same at their regular jobs.

"We're the owners, janitors, do-it-all work-



Roger McArdle, Esteban Atkinson and Dorian Hopperstad are Brownsville firefighters and business owners of Southernmost Wildlife Products. (VBR)

ers here,” Hopperstad said.

Going Local

One determination made early is that Southernmost would emphasize local products.

Many of the fishing lures and rods are Rio Grande Valley made. There are products from Harlingen companies RGV Lures and A.M. Fishing. There are also products from Battle Born Rodz of Weslaco, which is owned by a veteran.

“Why go with big name people when we have local talent?” Atkinson said. “We focus as much as we can on local brands. We give them an opportunity to get their names out there, we know they’ll return the favor.”

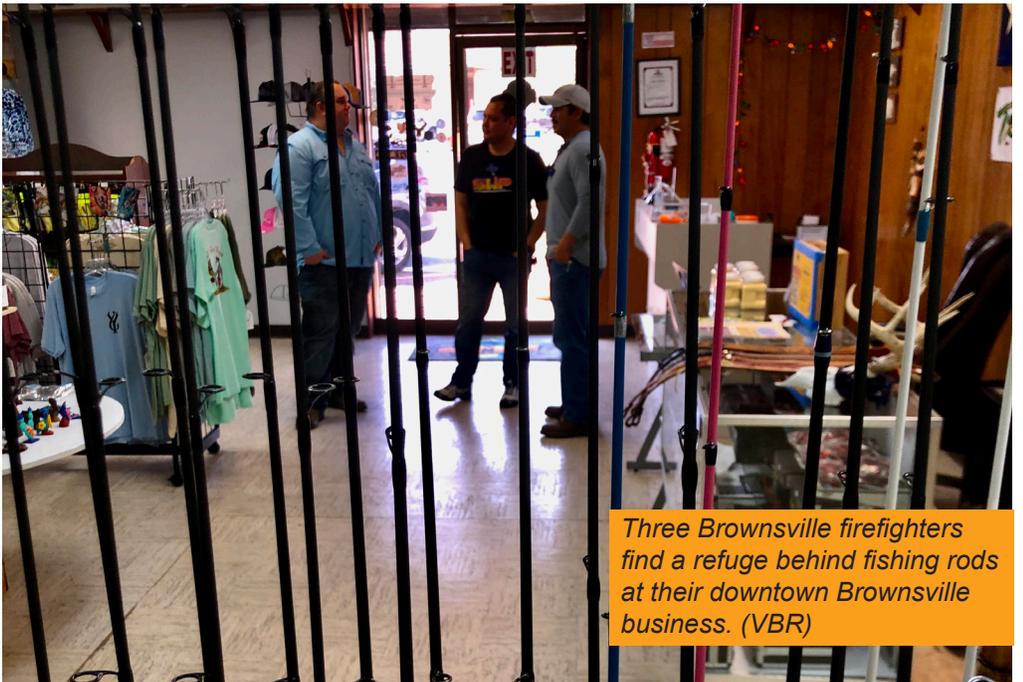
The local connections continue in the links Southernmost has built with local fishing clubs and area fishing charter businesses. On social media, Southernmost and the clubs promote each other, with the Brownsville shop congratulating outdoors men and women on landing big catches with photos posted to confirm the feats. The shop is a bright and cheerful place with the firefighters-turned-businessmen greeting both newcomers to the outdoors sporting life and those who are fishing and hunting pros.

The early doubts of running and owning a business have washed away. The three firefighters have found an outlet away from the pressures of being on duty. They are happily engaging in running a business they love and serving those who share their passions and love for the great outdoors.

“All the profits we’ve made so far, we’re rolling it back into our inventory,” Hopperstad said of expanding their offerings to apparel and accessories. “We’re getting out there, sharing our name, being part of what’s going on downtown, and supporting each other like we’ve always done.”



Southernmost Wildlife features products made in the Rio Grande Valley and Texas. (VBR)



Three Brownsville firefighters find a refuge behind fishing rods at their downtown Brownsville business. (VBR)



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Livestock Show Revives Hopes

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

Conrad Gonzales and his crew were constructing the last of the pens that will house the hundreds of cows, pigs, sheep and a variety of other animals on exhibit at the upcoming Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show.

It will be the 83rd edition of the annual spring affair in Mercedes. On a recent sun-splashed and crisp February morning, Gonzales was motoring around on a golf cart, checking on projects and running through a list of things to get done. The livestock show kicks off on March 10 and will run through the 20th of the month. Organizers expect more than 300,000 visitors to stream through the show's gates.

"We will be ready," said Gonzales, a San Benito native who grew up bringing his own animals to the big show for presentations. "For me, this is where I always wanted to be."

Gonzales is the grounds supervisor for the RGVLS. It's his sixth year on the job after working for 30 years at Valley cotton gins. He wishes he could have gotten back to the livestock show grounds sooner.

"I wish I could have had those 30 years here," he said.

Sofia Pena, the RGVLS programs and events director, feels the same. She is a former higher education administrator who is a current McAllen school board mem-

ber. Pena is also a self-described farm girl who grew up in Sullivan City, and like Gonzales, came to the livestock every year to exhibit steers, pigs and chickens. She treasures the memories of 4-H clubs and being part of Future Farmers of America. Being back on livestock show grounds, she said, is "like coming full circle."

"I couldn't wait to tell everyone," Pena said of how she felt after accepting a RGVLS offer six months ago. "I showed here as a child. To be back here now, someone can't understand what it means unless you grew up in 4-H and FFA like I did."

Pena's boss, general manager Mando Correa well understands the traditions of



Conrad Gonzales and his crew have been busy constructing animal pens and getting the grounds ready for the 2022 RGVLS (VBR)



Sofia Pena is the livestock show's programs and events director who grew up as a farm girl bringing animals for display at the Mercedes show. (VBR)

Valley agriculture. He worked for years as an educator in agricultural programs at area high schools before starting his current job just months before the 2020 livestock show. Correa has yet to experience what one would call a normal show. He is fervently hoping the 2022 show will be one such event.

“All indications are that folks are ready to come out,” he said. “We hope so. We really need it.”

Planning For Normal Show

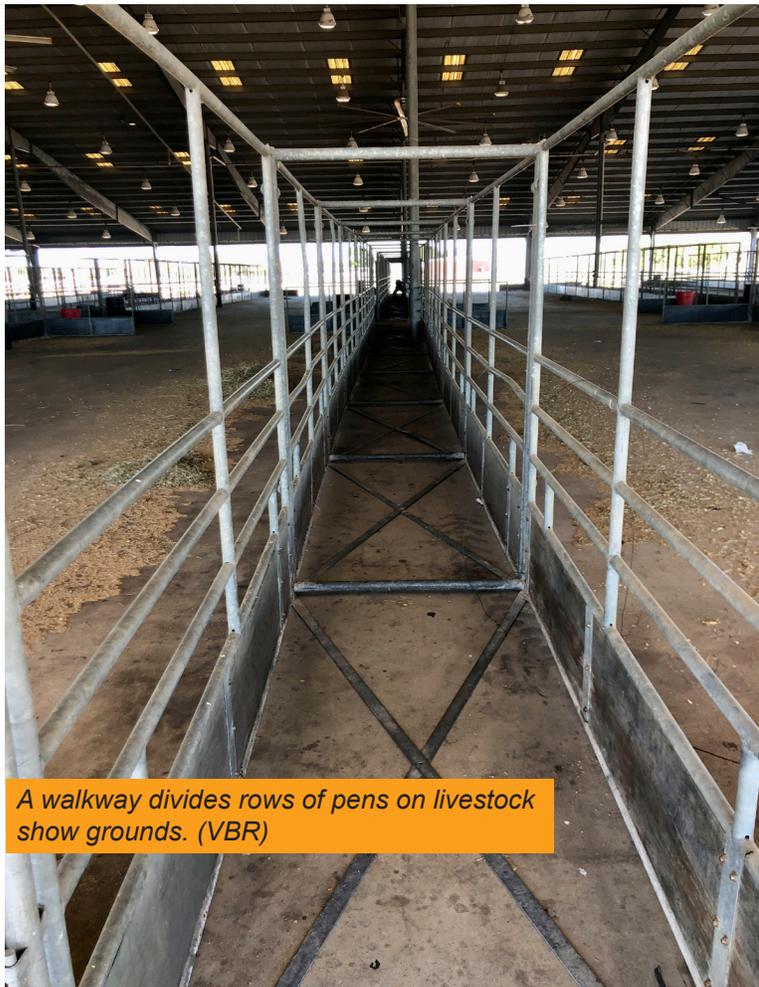
Heading into his first show as general manager, Correa was eagerly looking forward to his oversight of the 2020 show.

Then COVID arrived in those spring months. The 2020 show began as it normally would but was abruptly cut short, with enough time for the student exhibitors to complete their projects. The 2021 show was a modified version with crowd size limits due to public health concerns. So far, it appears the 2022 show will be without such limitations.

Correa and his staff are planning to host



Over 300,000 visitors are expected to go through the front gates in Mercedes for the 2022 edition of the RGVLs. (VBR)



A walkway divides rows of pens on livestock show grounds. (VBR)

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6,100 entries and 2,500 student exhibitors, who have spent months, if not years, raising the animals they will bring to the livestock show for display and eventual sale. The students will compete for prize money, scholarships, and sales of their livestock, pigs, sheep, goats and other animals, with the proceeds put away for their college educations.

The livestock show will also include rodeos, concerts and carnivals, but the student exhibits and activities are “why we’re here,” Correa said.

Big Business

The livestock show in Mercedes is the largest of its kind south of San Antonio.

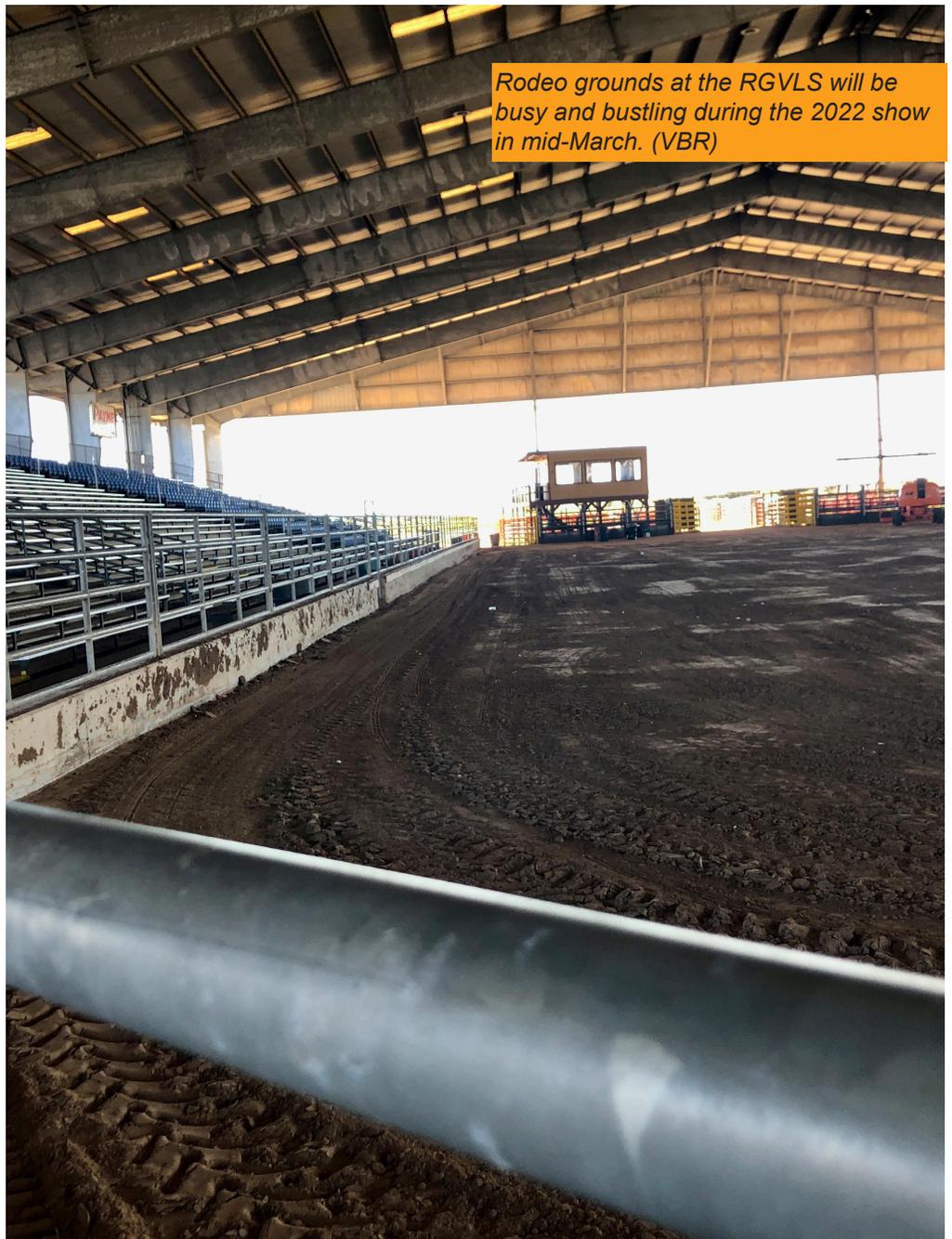
It’s a big business. A successful RGVLS will bring in close to \$2 million. The last two years have been far leaner ones, with revenues dropping below \$1 million due to restrictions. Correa and his staff are hoping there’s a pent-up demand among the Valley’s public to get out and about and return to the livestock like the old days before 2020.

He described the livestock show as being “vacation time” for many area families.

“We’re a little Disney World where you get the kids together and come out and enjoy the festivities,” Correa said. “We’re hoping 2022 will be that kind of year for us.”

If it is, Gonzales will have the grounds organized and ready for the exhibitors and the big crowds. Pena, the events director, is geared up to experience her first livestock show as a RGVLS manager.

“We catch ourselves reminiscing,” Pena said of she and Gonzales thinking back to when they were Valley youths and bringing animals to the Mercedes show for exhibit. “It’s still the place to be during spring break, just like it was when we were kids.”



Rodeo grounds at the RGVLS will be busy and bustling during the 2022 show in mid-March. (VBR)

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Business Promotes Wellness Via Dripping

By Chris Ardis

Aleck Rios and Crystal Curiel had no idea fate would steal the show when they met six years ago.

Crystal owned a spa and a swimwear/lingerie boutique in Brownsville at the time. She was also selling insurance. Aleck was living in McAllen and owned Corazon Health Care Services.

Aleck and Crystal joined mutual friends for dinner after the show and talked for hours. Within two weeks of meeting, Aleck told his mother, “She’s going to be my wife.”

It took Crystal a little longer.

“I didn’t know his heart yet, but his strong faith background and his maturity really attracted me,” she said.

It didn’t take much longer. A little over a month later, Crystal had seen his heart and accepted the engagement ring he presented to her during a trip to Las Vegas. They married eight months to the day after their first meeting.

Personal & Professional Growth

Aleck and Crystal saw three children added to their family, as well as several business ventures.

The most recent is ThrIVE Drip Spa, which celebrated its grand opening on Jan. 27. On its website, ThrIVE is described as “an I.V. vitamin therapy and lifestyle wellness spa that has taken traditional medical treatments and given them a modern twist.”

A drip spa like ThrIVE customizes drips and boosters to maximize health and wellness. Aleck was aware of the health benefits of dripping. He began researching the topic further. The couple hoped to combine Aleck’s experience in medical services and interest in memberships with Crystal’s background in the spa industry.

It led to Aleck launching ThrIVE Drip Spa, which was established in Houston. They liked what they saw online, so they reached out to its owners before visiting ThrIVE’s locations in the Houston area. They were impressed with the spa feel of ThrIVE and the services they offer. The couple also liked that they could be one of ThrIVE’s first franchisees.

“By being one of the first,” Aleck said, “we knew we would get to be part of its growth and to have a voice in that.”

There was something else that topped their list.

“More than anything, we really believed in

the product, and how it benefits people and helps them live healthier lives, Crystal said.

Benefits Of Dripping

ThrIVE offers 12 customized drips and a selection of vitamins, minerals, and amino acids

that can be added to each selection.

The drips are administered by a registered nurse in one of the drip lounges, which meet strict sanitation guidelines. For those unfamiliar with a drip spa, Aleck acknowledges the importance of education about the process and



ThrIVE RN Jessica Romero with owners Aleck and Crystal Rios prior to the preparation of a client's IV drip. (Courtesy)

its benefits.

“The minute you get past the mindset of an IV being a hospital needle, it’s a life changer,” he said.

The Detox Drip, for example, begins with the foundation of one liter of fluids combined with electrolytes and glutathione. This drip removes

toxins and improves skin and well-being.

One of the most requested products during the time of COVID-19 and the flu season is the Immuno Drip. Aleck said.

“This one adds vitamin C, glutathione and zinc to the foundation,” Aleck said.

A ThrIVe booklet says this combination “can

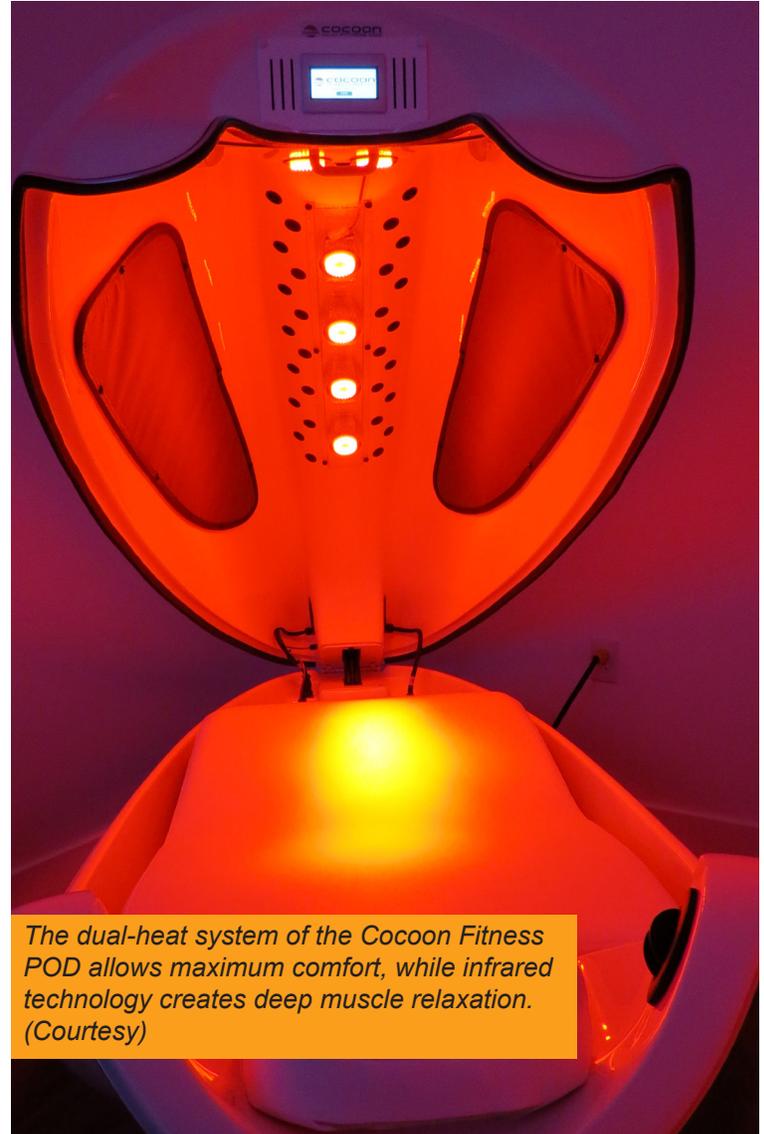
assist in boosting your immune system, supporting wellness and easing the symptoms of any ongoing illnesses.”

The drip menu also includes the Libido Drip, the Migraine Drip and the Slim Drip, along with other choices.

“Two-thirds of the population are chronically



ThrIVe Drip Spa offers cryotherapy, a treatment popular with marathon runners and other athletes. (Courtesy)



The dual-heat system of the Cocoon Fitness POD allows maximum comfort, while infrared technology creates deep muscle relaxation. (Courtesy)

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dehydrated and don't even know it," Crystal said.

Symptoms of dehydration include headaches, muscle aches, dry skin, sluggishness, cramps and hair loss.

"Through an IV, 100 percent of the nutrients are absorbed," Aleck said, which is a much higher absorption rate than taking vitamins orally.

ThrIVe also offers shots, such as B12, vitamin D, biotin and CoQ10. They also offer COVID testing. Cryotherapy, which exposes the body to subzero temperatures and is touted for its fitness, beauty, weight-loss, and general health, is another service available. It's a service that is popular with marathon runners and other athletes. Clients can also enjoy infrared therapy, which is recognized for its circulation, anti-aging and detoxification benefits.

ThrIVe welcomes call-in and walk-in clients. Monthly memberships offer the best benefits.

For Aleck and Crystal, ThrIVe is more than a business venture. It is a way of life.

"We both drip and use the other services religiously," Crystal said. "With the lifestyle we live, so many jobs and our three kids, it gives us the energy, the hydration and the mental clarity we need."



ThrIVe Drip Spa head nurse Jessica Romero carefully prepares an IV drip for a client. (Courtesy)



The main Drip Lounge at Thrive Drip Spa in McAllen offers clients a soothing environment with comfortable seating. (Courtesy)



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