

SEPTEMBER 2022

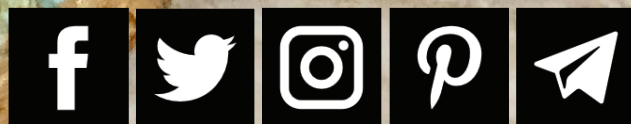
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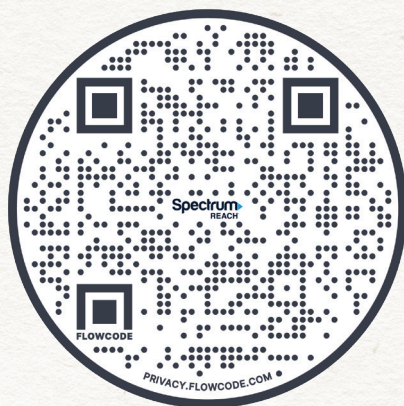


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# It Takes a Village

by: Todd Breland

In many ways it feels like yesterday that late co-founder and managing editor Kevin Knoch and I sat down in an Alamo hotel meeting room to discuss the origin of Valley Business Report. Ideas bounced back and forth; many “what ifs” played out in our minds to see if we were up to the challenge. As the pieces fell into place, we said “Let’s do it.”

Just over a year later, Kevin suffered a pulmonary aorta rupture. He passed away at press time of the first year anniversary edition. Our brand new publication hit a wall. My friend was gone and I was unsure of VBR’s future.

Kevin loved to interview subjects for stories but a few evenings after Kevin’s passing, he became the interviewed in a life-changing dream of mine. Under a bright light, Kevin sat in a chair, shook my hand and said, “Keep it going.” For the next several years with Eileen Mattei serving as VBR’s managing editor, we did just that. From

Kevin’s upstairs office, he passed along article ideas and helped guide the Valley’s print and online, positive news company.

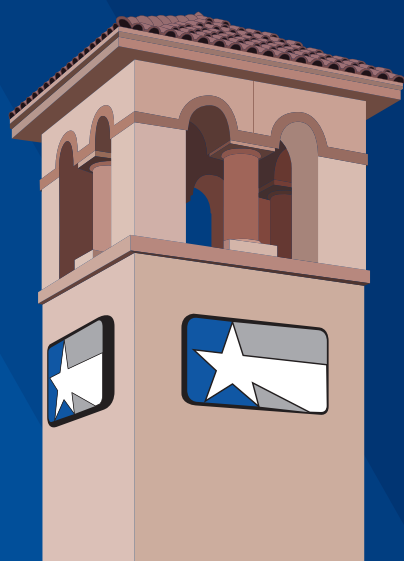
This month VBR is 13 years old. Our team is proud to connect regional business and community leaders by profiling local entrepreneurs and showcasing successful companies. More importantly, our purpose is to tell the real story of those who call the shots and lead by example. Since all behavior is emulated, since day one, we have operated under one simple rule: share the positives and more positives will happen.

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Through true journalistic form, VBR promotes regional economic development aimed to prosper local companies and improve quality of life for Deep South Texas

residents. That’s why we started and that’s how we will continue. Since the summer of 2009, our mission remains the same: connect you to our print and online content, and you to local entrepreneurs and community-focused advertisers.

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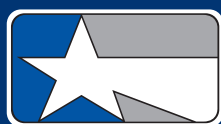


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# SPI Building Arts To Attract Tourists

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

JoAnn Evans wrapped up a teaching and education administration career 20 years ago and retired to South Padre Island.

In retirement, Evans and her husband enjoyed the beauty and calm of Island life, including the fishing. It was a leisure activity her husband actively enjoyed. There was one big thing missing, however, and it harkened back to Evans' background of teaching speech and theater in the Chicago area.

"I was missing the performing arts," she said.

From that longing, and getting to know other like-minded Island and Port Isabel residents, Evans and her fellow arts lovers began to build a framework toward creating "a critical mass of art." It's how Evans describes being part of a years-long effort to influence the city of South Padre Island towards building an arts community to bolster off-season tourism.

"If people were skeptical about it before, there's acceptance today about its value and what the art and culture piece can mean for us," Evans said. "Little by little, we're trying to build toward having a critical mass of art so that we have plenty of things to do related to art."

A breakthrough came in 2019 with the creation of the South Padre Island Art Business Incubator. The city's economic development corporation was a key player financially and organizationally in getting the art incubator going. It nurtures and supports four to six artists yearly for a one-year residency. It's not just art for art's sake. The artists are tutored and mentored on how to turn their artistic talents into a business. Hopes are they will eventually open a gallery on the Island.

Two artists who are products of the incubator's residency have already done so. One opened up a gallery next door to the art business incubator on Padre Boulevard.

"I'm witnessing this movement," said Deanna Powell, the art incubator's program director. "There's no limits to how we want the arts community here to grow."

## Art Amazes & Surprises

Powell walks through the work stations of the incubator's six current artists in residence.

The majority of this year's class are from Rio Grande Valley communities. Their

talents are apparent and stunning in quality and diversity of styles. There's surrealism, elaborate paper cut art, a muralist, fine art ceramics, and a metalsmith who makes jewelry and petite sculptures. Another artist is a shoe cobbler by training, whose expertise is working with leather.

Attracting artists with different backgrounds and styles is something the incubator seeks to

bring together. Artists learn from each other, Powell said, collaborating and sharing their knowledge. It also makes for a fascinating array of artwork when a visitor walks into view – and possibly buys – the artwork on display. Powell spoke of beachgoers accustomed to SPI's surf and sand walking into the incubator's gallery. They are at times surprised and amazed that such a space of art



*JoAnn Evans is a community leader in establishing an arts presence on South Padre Island (VBR)*

exists on South Padre.

“It’s not something people expect to see here,” she said. “It’s like a really pleasant surprise for them. It affirms that we have a strong arts presence on the Island.”

### Model Of Success

There is “no magic number,” Evans said, as to how many art galleries the Island needs to attract more tourists inclined to that quality of life. She counts six at the present time.

“We hope to increase that to seven, eight, nine and get up around 10 galleries,” said Evans, who is a board member for the art business incubator and is also the director of El Paseo Arts of Port Isabel. “It’s that massing of art we want so if people want to take a vacation and are interested in art and culture, they can come here and do it in a very pleasant and beautiful environment, even when the sun isn’t shining.”

There is a key goal. It’s the oft-discussed topic of attracting tourists in the fall and winter when temperatures dip.

“It’s about filling in the gaps in between at our Island,” Powell said of the months between the strong tourism peaks of spring

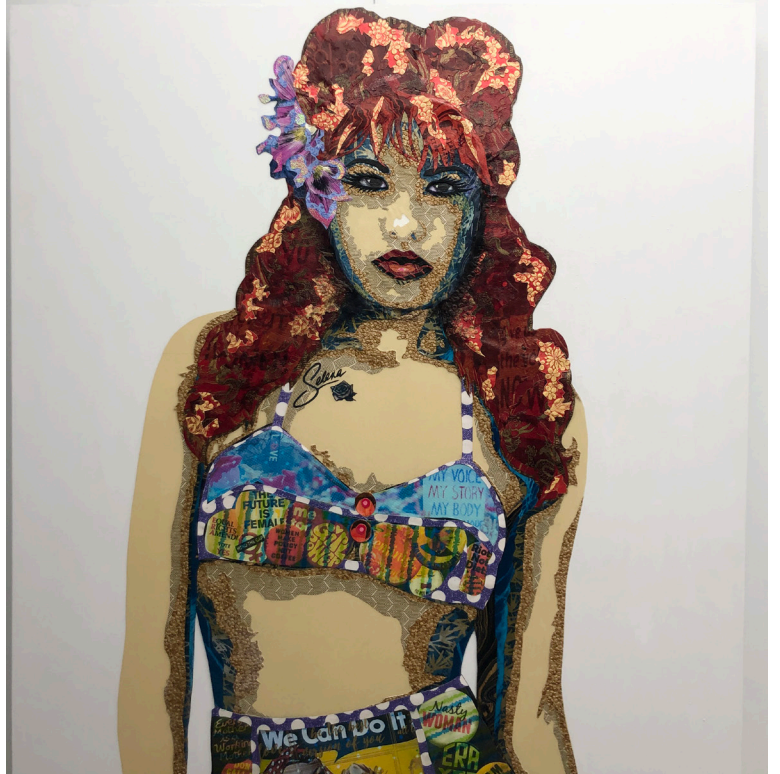


*Deanna Powell directs the programs and oversees the artists in residence at the South Padre Island Art Business Incubator. (VBR)*



*The work of artists in residence fills the gallery at the SPI Art Business Incubator. (VBR)*

*The SPI art business incubator features a wide array of artwork, including one of Latina icon Selena. (VBR)*



and summer and the slower periods of fall and winter.

Right now, art and culture are an emerging choice to do just that. Galleries and art classes have a variety of things to do connected to art.

“We’re seeing success with the model,” Evans said. “We’re seeing incremental growth. You can look around and see we have the resources to do it.”



SPI Art Business Incubator logo on exterior of building. (VBR)



An artist in residency at the SPI art business incubator features the work of a muralist who specializes in highly detailed paintings. (VBR)

The diversity and styles of artwork at the SPI incubator includes paintings reflecting coastal life. (VBR)



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# Home Builders Focusing Anew On Mid-Valley

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

Esperanza Homes from its base in upper Hidalgo County moved into the Brownsville market in recent years.

The home builder skipped over the Mid-Valley but it was a short-lived omission.

Esperanza, a division of Rhodes Enterprises, had designs on the Mid-Valley all along. It established on paper a Mid-Valley division in 2020, which in Esperanza's case, runs from San Juan to Weslaco. The company waited patiently for housing markets to settle after the shockwaves of 2020 economic uncertainties. Esperanza then moved this year to break ground on Texas Heights in Weslaco and Sioux Coves in San Juan.

"We look at population density, land availability, affordability and demographics," said Shant Samtani, the vice president of sales for Esperanza Homes. "We looked at all of those factors and we could see there's definitely a need for single-home development in Weslaco and the Mid-Valley."

## Recognizing Mid-Valley Potential

Oscar Zarate assessed the same sort of factors and the Mercedes-based builder saw his community and La Feria as the heart of the Rio Grande Valley cities with lots of open land and ready access to Expressway 83 for commuters. McAllen, Pharr and other upper Valley communities are filled with developments and crowded space along the expressway, he said. Mercedes on east to La Feria and Harlingen will be a new hot zone for developers and builders, Zarate said.

"We're seeing everything coming this way," said Zarate, who owns Zarate Homes & Designs. "There are people who have wanted to live in Mercedes because it's the midpoint to everything, but there were no lots available. We're addressing that right now."

In July, Zarate broke ground on Valley Ranch Estates on Mile 1 E Road. The 185-lot development is less than a mile from the expressway and in close proximity to the Rio Grande Valley Premium Outlets. Then in August, Zarate held a groundbreaking for a 121-residential Main Street lot development in La Feria, the Brooks Estate Subdivision.

Both Esperanza Homes and Zarate Homes see a Mid-Valley area whose time has come to experience the kind of developments commonly found in McAllen and Brownsville.

"Open land, location and access to the

expressway are key factors," Zarate said. "The Mid-Valley has all three."

## Open Land & Opportunities

It's open land for now behind the sales office trailer on north Texas Boulevard in Weslaco.

Dirt has been moved and shifted in preparation for the formation of lots at Texas Heights. Samtani and his sales staff sit in their company trailer where prospective buyers are

already coming in to ask questions and seek information. Texas Heights will eventually be a residential community with well over 100 homes.

Samanti explained the methodology of Rhodes Enterprises, the developers of Tres Lagos in McAllen, which guides the building goals of Esperanza Homes. Starting this fall, Samanti and his staff will seek to start the construction of four homes per month, with



*Kassandra Gonzalez, sales manager, and Shant Samtani, vice president of sales, are heading up efforts to develop Texas Heights in Weslaco. (VBR)*

home prices starting in the \$190,000 range. It would start a total of 96 homes under construction in a year.

The challenges in reaching those goals will come more from convincing potential customers to leave existing homes than dealing with competitors, Samanti said. Used home inventory is scarce nationwide as markets recalibrate. Homeowners tended to stay put given recent economic uncertainties, so the churn of existing homes being put up for sale slowed greatly.

“The biggest competition we have right now is a buyer’s existing home,” Samanti said. “It’s convincing them to leave and move into a new home. You look at a market like the Mid-Valley and there has been a huge shortage of new homes being built.”

### Spillover Growth

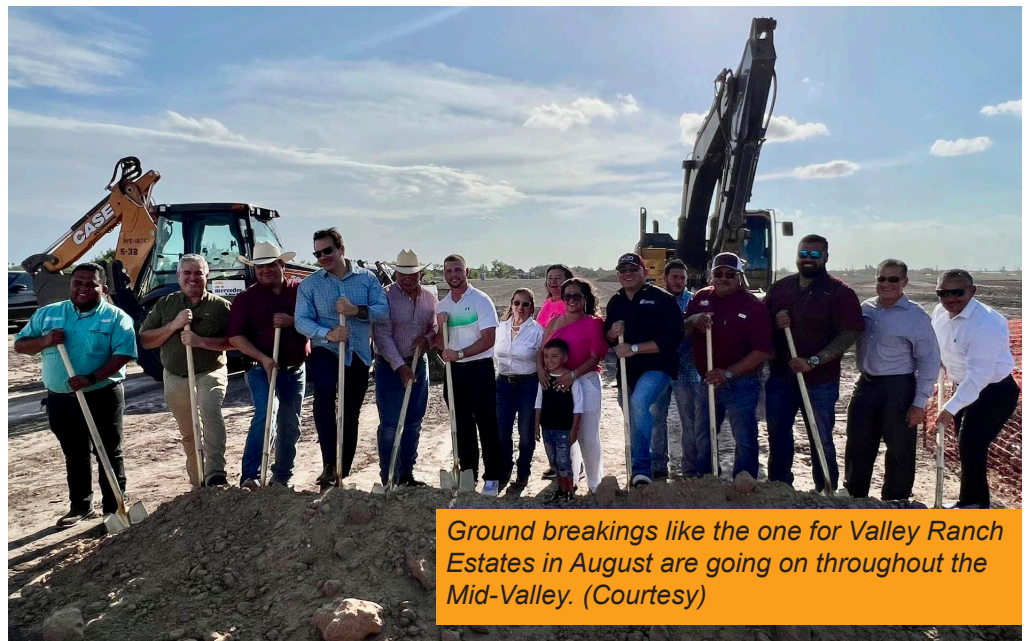
Builders like Esperanza and Zarate Homes are moving rapidly to fill that new home construction void in the Mid-Valley.

Zarate in Mercedes is as enthusiastic in seeing the opportunities as is Samanti in Weslaco. Zarate will offer substantial discounts on lot purchases at his Mercedes development for buyers who work in the health care and law enforcement fields, as well as military families.

“I’m working with the city of Mercedes to drive growth here and attract more anchor tenants,” Zapata said of retail. “Retailers and investors look for rooftops. I’m trying to work collaboratively for growth and economic development that will help everyone.”

The end result, Zapata said, is smaller Valley communities benefiting from the focused efforts home builders are now giving the Mid-Valley.

“These more rural smaller communities have so much potential,” he said. “We’re seeing spillover from McAllen. I know we’re going to do really well in Mercedes.”



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# Center Spans Border To Boost Opportunities

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

The Casa de Nylon-turned-entrepreneurial resource center is nearing completion in downtown Brownsville.

The 36,000-square-foot, two-story facility on east Adams Street should be open for business – and innovation – by the end of this month. It will be the largest facility of its kind south of San Antonio. The eBridge Center for Business & Commercialization is located just a few blocks from the Gateway International Bridge. The Brownsville Community Improvement Corporation intends to make it a crossroads for entrepreneurship.

The \$4-million center is expected to be completed late this month pending any additional delays due to supply side issues. When completed, it will be a one-stop shop where a business prospect can walk in and receive help in developing business plans, get a cost analysis on operations, learn how to get access to capital and test their products in a “blueprint lab.”

There are many incubation centers that offer business development advice and expertise. The eBridge Center will offer those services but will go beyond the conventional business incubator. It will offer an array of services. Scaling up local small businesses and assisting them to grow will be a key component. It will continue its close partnership with the Entrepreneurship and Commercialization Center of UTRGV, which will have offices in the center. The Brownsville Chamber of Commerce will have an extension office at the facility. City government will as well to offer insights on the permitting process.

The building’s second floor will feature large laboratory space. Here, an emerging business can temporarily house its equipment and test its capabilities before going to market. Flexibility overall will be important. The BCIC wants its new center to adapt to opportunities and trends as they emerge.

“We’re agnostic when it comes to business sectors,” said Nathan Burkhart, the director of marketing and small business development for the BCIC. “We don’t pick out a sector or two ... we can do technology and space, supply chain and logistics, food manufacturing. We can always pivot and develop programs and resources to meet a demand and interest.”

## Changing With Times

Cori Pena has seen economic development evolve in Brownsville.

She is the new president and chief executive officer of the BCIC. Pena’s appointment came in early July after working her way up in the organization over the last

12 years. Her early years with the BCIC, which is a type B economic development organization by state designation, was focused on quality-of-life issues. Those included hike-and-bike trails, funding for museums and improvements for the Gladys Porter Zoo.



*Cori Pena is at the helm of the BCIC as president and chief executive officer as it sets to open the eBridge Center. (VBR)*

Over time, as those goals were met, quality of life turned to focusing on growing jobs through the development of small businesses.

“As we’ve progressed, we have put more eggs in our basket,” Pena said as she began a tour of the still-under-construction e-Bridge center. “We know entrepreneurs are the heart of economic development.”

Pena and Burkhart ascended to the second floor of the new center. The BCIC offices will be on that floor as will be the lab and a data center to be certified by the U.S. Department of Defense in giving eBridge users added capabilities. The Musk Foundation donated \$355,000 for the construction of the eBridge. It’s a reminder of the influence that Elon Musk’s SpaceX has had on the Brownsville economy.

### Differing Role

The BCIC’s partnering EDC – the Greater Brownsville Incentives Corporation – is a type B organization and has pursued some of the bigger opportunities relating to SpaceX at Boca Chica and other potential large employers. The BCIC’s role is different in that it seeks to help small business owners,

the ones “who grew up here,” Burkhart said. It is also working with Mexican business interests looking to enter the U.S. market in making Brownsville a crossroads place to go for economic and business development.

Pena continued to detail all of the services the eBridge will offer, including a patent office, as its opening nears.

“We will have a lot to offer,” she said. “And it’ll all be under one roof.”



*The eBridge Center in downtown Brownsville will provide an array of services to assist small business owners and entrepreneurs. (VBR)*



*Nathan Burkhart, the BCIC's small business development director, points out some of the features the eBridge Center will house. (VBR)*

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# STC Starr Campus Transforms Region

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

Its start was a modest one with a few classes in historic buildings where Fort Ringgold once stood in Rio Grande City.

It was the 1994-95 school year and the beginnings of the South Texas College in Starr County. The school went by South Texas Community College in those early years. No matter how humble the origins, it would prove to be transformational for Rio Grande City and area communities.

Higher education had finally arrived in Starr County.

Fast forward nearly 30 years later. There's an 11-building, 63-acre campus in Rio Grande City on FM 3167, just off the highway heading to Roma, a South Texas College campus for all of Starr County. The technical classes in trades like welding, automotive technology and advanced air conditioning would come first to go with basic academic classes found at community colleges.

The westernmost college campus in the Rio Grande Valley would hardly stand still. Every opportunity to vote on bond issues to expand and improve the Starr County campus was approved by county residents. This was even as Hidalgo County voters turned down similar STC proposals. The increase in funding as approved by Starr voters helped to add allied health programs, featuring nursing. New additions also included advanced manufacturing and industrial programs.

A badly needed library was built as was a student services building. A 300-seat events center was added to the campus and is shared with the communities of Starr County. The campus is a jewel for the county. Area leaders say it has changed the way the communities view themselves and their possibilities.

"This campus has transformed our county and its communities," said Rose Benavidez, the chair of the STC Board of Trustees who also serves as president of the Starr County Industrial Foundation. "It has allowed us to have access to higher education. It has been a generational change for this entire region."

## Different Perspectives

Arturo Montiel had spent over a decade with the STC system when he became the campus administrator for the Starr County campus.

Montiel spent time at both the main McAllen campus and Mid-Valley campus in Weslaco before arriving in Rio Grande City in 2013.

What became apparent to him is that Starr County parents are more involved in their grown children's education. The students themselves also expect and want more personal guidance.

"I tell my colleagues that students in Starr County are different and so are the parents," Montiel said of STC's 3,000-student enrollment campus in Rio Grande City. "Cookie cutter ideas are not going to work in Starr County."

He attributes it to the more rural setting of Starr County along with most families being people of faith and coming from close-knit communities. Montiel sees the familial feel of the Starr County campus as a plus. He accordingly strives to incorporate that element into how staff and faculty connect with students.

The school-student connection was tested in 2020 with the necessity of remote learning. Something good came out of it, however, in Montiel's view with technology sharpening distance learning. What wasn't acceptable before became the norm as Starr students linked up to classes in McAllen. In person is usually preferred, but when that's not possible or something can be arranged remotely, saving a Starr student an hour-long drive or lengthy bus ride to McAllen is a worthy goal, he said.

"One of the biggest issues is keeping our students here," Montiel said. "We look for ways to offer things here and that includes being connected with technology so our students and an instructor can see each other and interact."

## Growing Opportunities

The need for such remote linkups is becoming less necessary as STC's campus continues to improve its offerings.

Allied health programs, especially nursing, will continue to be a focal point. Montiel envisions growth in technical areas like cybersecurity and wind and solar power as fields with a growing demand. Trade programs like diesel mechanics will be strengthened. In academic areas, Montiel mentioned social work programs and criminal justice as fields that STC in Starr County will highlight. The college will establish a police academy as jobs with the Border Patrol and other law enforcement agencies continue to grow.

On the economic development side, Benavidez points to the dramatic dip in local unemployment with the building of the STC campus in Starr County. What was an unemployment rate of over 40 percent has shrunk to single digits with a better educated and trained workforce. The approval of the



Arturo Montiel (left), administrator for STC's Starr County campus, and STC President Ricardo Solis (right) at a recent campus event in Rio Grande City. (Courtesy)

bond votes reinforced the belief that county residents have in higher education, she said.

“People here understand that investing in education was the way to improve things,” said Benavidez, a Starr County native who heads up the STC Board of Trustees. “College is now reachable for anyone growing up in our communities.”



*The growth of programs at STC's Starr County campus makes college reachable for area students. (Courtesy)*



*The STC Starr County campus features 11 buildings on a picturesque location in Rio Grande City. (Courtesy)*

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# Restaurateur Finds Bliss In Mercedes

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

Cindy Avalos got through a challenging 2020 that as a restaurant manager meant overseeing thin staff doing the work of many as her industry struggled to survive with pick up and delivery orders.

For Avalos, it was a continuation of a career working in restaurants that started in her childhood in Harlingen, helping her parents with a Mexican food restaurant.

"I have it in my bones," she said of working in restaurants. "I've done every job you can think of."

In 2020, it was working as a manager at the Olive Garden in Harlingen. Before that, she worked in management with Buffalo Wild Wings. At both companies, she worked in every role, from cooking to waiting on tables. Her father, Miguel, also opened a second restaurant in Mercedes in 2020. The business would not survive that year, but Miguel still owned the building on 3rd Street in downtown Mercedes.

Cindy decided she would take it on, leaving her restaurant chain manager's job in Harlingen to try running her own business. It was something Avalos had long envisioned and decided in the spring that 2022 was the year to make it happen. She did a redesign of her father's old restaurant, creating "something cozy," Avalos said. It's a place where a diner can "relax and enjoy yourself."

Her brunch/dinner-styled business – which she named Bliss – is unlike anything Mercedes has when it comes to restaurants. It's the distinction she was seeking to reach.

"There's not a lot of options in a smaller community like Mercedes but it has a lot to offer," Avalos said. "I saw something here in

Mercedes, and when the opportunity came about, I took it."

## Brunchy Delights

Dropping for brunch at the Bliss means taking a look down a list of tasty choices.

There's salmon toast, smoked, with cream cheese, crushed red pepper and a boiled egg. Next on the menu list is salsa verde eggs benedict with Canadian bacon and "gooey mozzarella cheese." The brunch nachos selection has a mixture of corn, black beans



*Cindy Avalos fulfilled a dream of running her own business by opening the Bliss restaurant in Mercedes. (VBR)*



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and salsa over a bed of crispy tortilla chips smothered in white cheese. It's clearly not breakfast tacos from a local convenience store or huevos rancheros from her dad's restaurant in Harlingen.

And it's playing well.

"Came for brunch," said one customer, Derrick Magallanes who posted an online review. "If I can give them 100 stars I will, the customer service, food, everything is great! Hidden gem in the Queen City."

The dinner menu is drawing similar reviews. There's the ultimate Bliss burger with creamy pepper sauce, gooey provolone cheese and crispy bacon with crispy fries. Among the other choices are homemade chicken bacon mac and cheese, and homemade meatloaf with creamy mash potatoes smothered in thick brown gravy.

"Open face bliss burger with a side of brussels sprouts to watch the carbs," wrote Daniel Mejia in an online review. "Best burger in Texas. Loved the chill music and relaxing chic modern environment."

Avalos knows her way around a kitchen. The creativity of the Bliss menu reflects her years of experience working in restaurants

and learning the ropes from all of the operational and production aspects. The same goes for how she designed the Bliss. It's chic interior, as one online reviewer puts it, has the feel of being elegant and trendy. Put it all together, and it's what Avalos imagined her restaurant would look like.

"I love what I do," she said. "I love the business and I've known it all my life; I love to cook and everything here is made from scratch and made fresh."

### Feeling Welcome

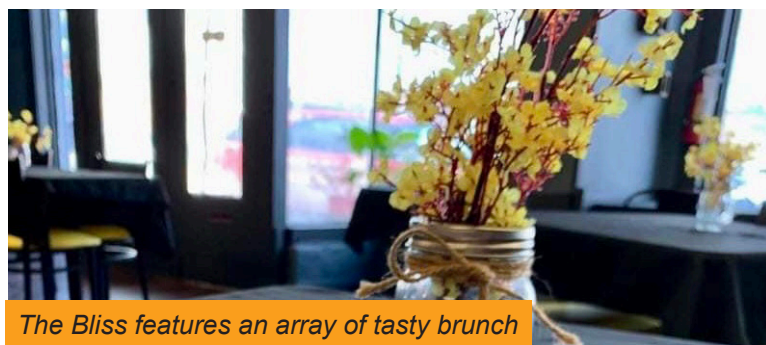
Avalos spoke of taking a liking to Mercedes and the welcome she has felt in the Mid-Valley city.

"The mayor has come by to eat here and to thank me for opening a business in Mercedes," she said. "You appreciate that sort of welcome. Everyone here is so patient from a customer's perspective as we prepare their dishes. It's a treat for everyone that comes in. I think they appreciate having something like this here and not needing to go to Weslaco or Harlingen."

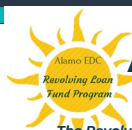
From the start, Avalos as a young businesswoman knew she "could do this." And now she has.



The open face Bliss burgers were called by one diner as the "best burger in Texas." (Courtesy)



The Bliss features an array of tasty brunch dishes and desserts. (Courtesy)



### ALAMO EDC REVOLVING LOAN FUND PROGRAM

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# Hinojosa Finds Satisfaction In Helping

By Chris Ardis

Help Wanted. Now Hiring. Join Our Team. Signs posted at entrances and on marquees of many local businesses share these messages.

Employee shortages seem to be affecting most industries, resulting in shorter hours of operation, canceled flights, sections of restaurants closed and rising stress levels. Martha Vela Hinojosa believes she was created for these current times of employers searching for workers.

Born and raised in Mission, Hinojosa graduated from Mission High School and entered Pan American University (now the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley), majoring in business management. She had her sights set on owning a business. Three years in, Hinojosa left college and got married. She remained focused on her career goals after the birth of her children.

One day, Hinojosa received a call from Maria Sanchez Fletcher. Fletcher, she said, recognized the need for a locally owned “temp” agency and opened Fletcher Personnel Services in McAllen. A mutual friend referred Fletcher to Hinojosa and a job offer was made and accepted.

“She was very professional,” Hinojosa said. “We had to be on time. If we went to any workshop, we had to write a report about what we learned. She put a lot of pressure on me but I learned from the best.”

Hinojosa recruited companies and placed temps. Agency employees are “temps” in that they often fill in temporarily for full-time employees out on leave or to help for seasonal work. The company can pick them up for full-time employment after a probationary term. Agencies coach temps on how to dress and act professionally in workplace settings.

“You have to educate employers on the benefits of using temps,” Hinojosa said. “We do the screening, background checks, payroll, taxes and things like drug testing. We even look at the chemistry of a person to see if we feel they are a match with the company.”

## Taking Off

Fletcher eventually sold her company. Hinojosa agreed to work for the new owner, earning a promotion to area manager covering McAllen, Brownsville and Corpus

Christi. She continued to learn, knowing one day she would promote herself to business owner. Hinojosa came to realize all the job-related traveling she was doing was not providing the needed flexibility to spend more time with her children.

She turned to her mentor, Fletcher, for advice.

“She told me, ‘If you think you can fly, fly,’” Hinojosa said.

In 1992, Hinojosa took off, opening International Temporary Services in McAllen. Experience had taught her a lot, but she had more to learn. She eventually closed the company to restructure. In 2015, Hinojosa opened LHM Employment Group



*Martha Vela Hinojosa, owner of LHM Employment Group in McAllen. (Courtesy)*

in McAllen. She finds herself exactly where she set her sights years before.

“I get the greatest satisfaction in finding a job for someone, knowing they are providing food and a home for themselves and their family, and I had a part in that,” Hinojosa said.

### Happy Employers

Satisfied employers also motivate her, like Teresa Montalvo, the store manager/buyer at The Exceptional Home Center in McAllen. Hinojosa placed Ignacio “Iggy” Aguilar Jr. with Montalvo as a furniture installer and in delivery/warehouse.

“I was looking for a qualified and truly interested employee after using several online employment websites,” Montalvo said. “I had so many who promised to come in for interviews and never showed up or who applied, even though they did not meet the qualifications.”

Montalvo likes that the employee is responsible to both Hinojosa and her, creating a higher level of accountability. She found, in Aguilar, exactly what she needed and plans to hire him as a full-time



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employee. Aguilar couldn't be happier.

"The door opened for me perfectly," he said.

Laid off and unable to find a job, Aguilar decided he needed to move up north.

Distressed that he would be separated from his young son, he applied at LHM, a last-ditch effort before saying goodbye.

"They called me the same day," Aguilar

said, "and I started work the next day. It's good pay and I got the hours I needed to spend time with my son. It's the first place where I feel like I'm family."

Carlos Lopez, a partner in Bespoke Logistics in McAllen, has counted on Hinojosa for years.

"She really takes care of our HR without us having that department in our company,"

Lopez said. "It is truly a cost-saving decision for us."

Hinojosa, serious about her job and gregarious by nature, can't see herself doing anything else.

"I always knew I wanted to work with people," Hinojosa said. "If you're looking for a job, please come by. Come and be part of the LHM employee pool."



*LHM Employment Group in McAllen hired Ignacio Aguilar Jr. and placed him at The Exceptional Home Center in McAllen. He will be a full-time employee of the furniture and accessory store when his probationary period with LHM expires. Courtesy)*

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