

**JANUARY 2024**

# VBR

## McAllen Mod

**Mission Ahead  
Feliz In McAllen  
Brownsville Blossoms**

For the latest in RGV news across the web, find us online!  
[www.ValleyBusinessReport.com](http://www.ValleyBusinessReport.com)







**You can count  
on Texas Mutual  
to fight fraud.**

## **Business is safer, stronger, better with Texas Mutual.**

At Texas Mutual, we have a zero-tolerance policy for fraud and work vigilantly to investigate and prevent fraud that could drive up your workers' comp premium. In fact, the work of our Special Investigations Department has resulted in over \$13.5 million in recoveries and restitution since 2018. Protect your bottom line from fraud with Texas Mutual.

**[texasmutual.com/fraud](https://texasmutual.com/fraud)**

**TexasMutual<sup>®</sup>**  
WORKERS' COMPENSATION INSURANCE



# Your Story Goes Here

by: Todd Breland

New projects, new ventures, new beginnings -- a turning of the page is in the air.

Where are you taking your team this year? How will you get from startup stage or rebirth concept to total success for all involved? What's on the horizon for your company or organization?

Starting with our February magazine, this page is your story. Email us. Tell us your 2024 and beyond plans. This executive summary will be from you, RGV entrepreneurs and other business leaders. We want you to share your ideas, your exciting news with fellow VBR print and online readers.

Since our beginning in September 2009, the purpose of our site, VBR e-Brief and publication is to connect regional leaders with the Valley community. Unifying our counties and towns with buyers and decision influencers through a positive news forum has always been and will always be our mission.

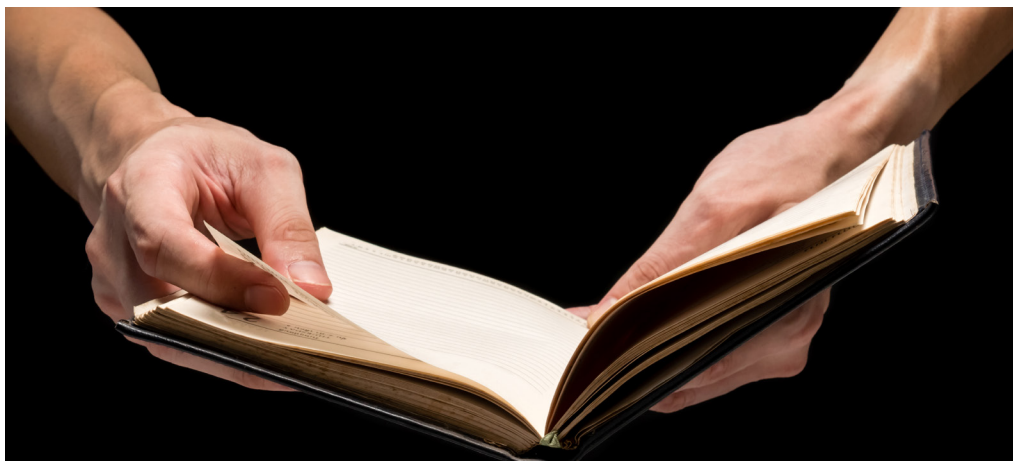
Email the who, what, when, where and why

to [info@valleybusinessreport.com](mailto:info@valleybusinessreport.com). We'll be in touch so you can tell your story to fellow Valley leaders. Our unique region is full of grit, determination and creativity. So many startups began in back yards, home kitchens and garage offices, and have grown into successful businesses.

We are thrilled for this page to showcase your

beginning, your journey, your continued page or new chapter. VBR's digital components encourage the sharing and interaction of your organization's story to customers and others who need to know.

Let's make 2024 the year of the Rio Grande Valley! Four counties, 33 cities and towns ... one region. Together we are RGV Strong!



## BRITT ALAN WOODS

Executive Vice President &  
Director of Financial & Insurance Services

**Office: (956) 984-2919**

**Mobile: (956) 313-4051**

**[woods@lonestarnationalbank.com](mailto:woods@lonestarnationalbank.com)**

## Wealth Management & Trust

Our personalized Wealth Management strategies are crafted to match your unique needs, aiming to create a stable future for you and your family. Emphasizing the importance of personal connections, we prioritize our clients' financial goals in delivering top-notch services.

**Call Our Wealth Management Team Today!**

Our dedicated experts are ready to tailor personalized strategies, guiding you towards your financial goals with expertise and dedication.



**Lone Star  
National Bank<sup>SM</sup>**

520 E. Nolana Avenue • McAllen, TX  
[www.lonestarnationalbank.com](http://www.lonestarnationalbank.com)

Wealth Management & Trust  
Investments Are:

NOT A DEPOSIT • NOT FDIC INSURED • NOT INSURED BY ANY FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AGENCY • NOT GUARANTEED BY THE BANK • MAY LOSE VALUE

SCAN ME!



1-800-580-0322



[www.lonestarnationalbank.com](http://www.lonestarnationalbank.com)

(1) Third party fees for internet, messaging, or data plans may apply.



# Table Of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Pipe Art	5
It's In The Blood	8
With Open Hearts	10
Finding Balance	12
Looking Ahead	14
Something For Everyone	16

## VBR Staff

General Manager  
Todd Breland  
todd@valleybusinessreport.com

Content Editor  
Ricardo D. Cavazos  
ricardo@valleybusinessreport.com

Online Editor, VBR e-Brief  
Angey Murray  
angey@valleybusinessreport.com

Writer  
Chris Ardis

Design Director  
John M. Hazlett  
john@valleybusinessreport.com

Production - Daniel's Printing Place



**ON THE  
HUNT FOR  
A DEGREE?**

**REGISTER NOW**  
[southtexascollege.edu](http://southtexascollege.edu)



**SOUTH TEXAS  
COLLEGE**



# Art On Pipes Gives McAllen New Look

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

The roughly 300 irrigation pipes found by roadsides and canals throughout McAllen predate the city's rapid growth and industrialization of recent decades.

McAllen's founding (like the rest of the Rio Grande Valley) has its roots in agriculture. The network of pipes played a key role in controlling and directing the flow of river water to area farmland. Much of the latter are no longer there but the pipes remain. They stand like "invisible structures in plain sight," said Chris Lash, the program manager for Keep McAllen Beautiful.

They are invisible no more. Brilliant artwork adorns nearly 100 of McAllen's pipes. It's part of a years-long effort between city government and Keep McAllen Beautiful to take what was gray and nondescript and turn it into art reflective of the community and the region. This creative form of public art features RGV nature, birding, flowers, folkloric and Mexican themes. The focus of the pipe artwork is to look like the community where the pipes stand, enduring through time.

"It has been a variety," Lash said of the diverse artwork found throughout McAllen via the network of pipes. "We already have a beautiful city. The public art on the pipes has added to the beauty and enhanced it."

## New Look At Art

The idea of splashing some color on McAllen's irrigation pipes started in 2014.

The concept at the time was to place tiles on the pipes. The method did add color to the graying pipes but at a costly price tag. The decision came in 2017 to try utilizing local artists to paint imagery on the pipes. It was a more economical and creative effort to continue the initial project. By this time, hike-and-bike trails in McAllen were firmly established alongside 2nd Street and Bicentennial Boulevard, with other trails built next to canals and many pipes in the city.

"The community loved it," said Lash of the first set of pipes that featured the work of artists. "It was a whole different way to look at art. It became part of the fabric of the community. Some of the paintings are



McAllen artist Gloria Ester sits at the base of her artwork on an irrigation pipe in the city. (Courtesy)



like pictures in a magazine. They're that vivid."

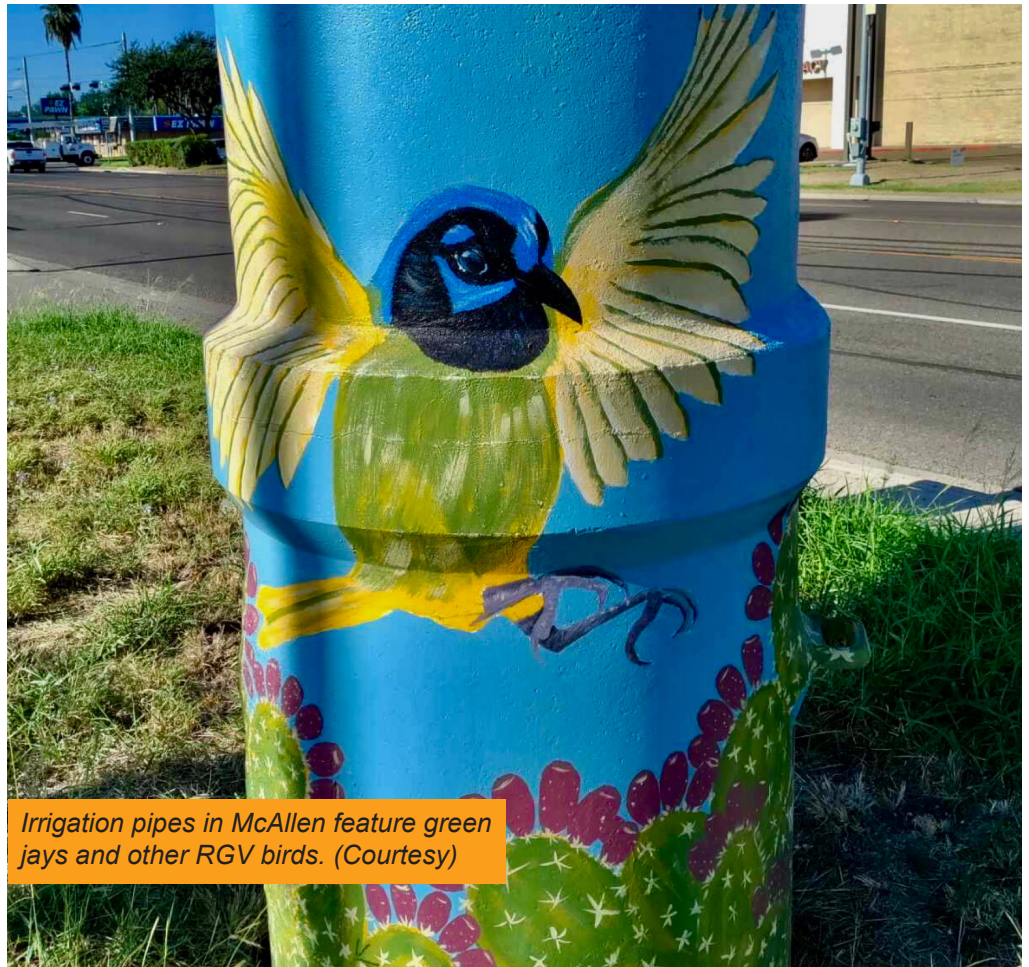
Indeed, they are. A folkloric dancer is featured on one busy intersection along 2nd Street with a long flowing dress and big flowers on the base of the pipe. A tall and thin pipe along Expressway 83 has been transformed into a Toltec totem pole in another part of town. Many of the pipes feature RGV birds like green jays and crested caracaras, with ridley sea turtles of South Padre Island fame highlighted on other pipes.

Some of the artwork reaches high into the McAllen sky and requires scaffolding for artists to scale and paint the top sections of tall pipes. The citywide public artwork has caught the attention of Texas Architect Magazine and the Texas Commission of the Arts. Most recently, the Texas Department of Transportation partnered with the City of McAllen and Keep McAllen Beautiful to have a 408-foot mural painted on an irrigation wall on the intersection of Pecan Boulevard and 2nd.

"It's bringing public art to the community," Lash said.

### Community-Wide Effort

Keep McAllen Beautiful is a 501C



*Irrigation pipes in McAllen feature green jays and other RGV birds. (Courtesy)*



*An artist puts the finishing touches on a pipe in a McAllen field. (Courtesy)*

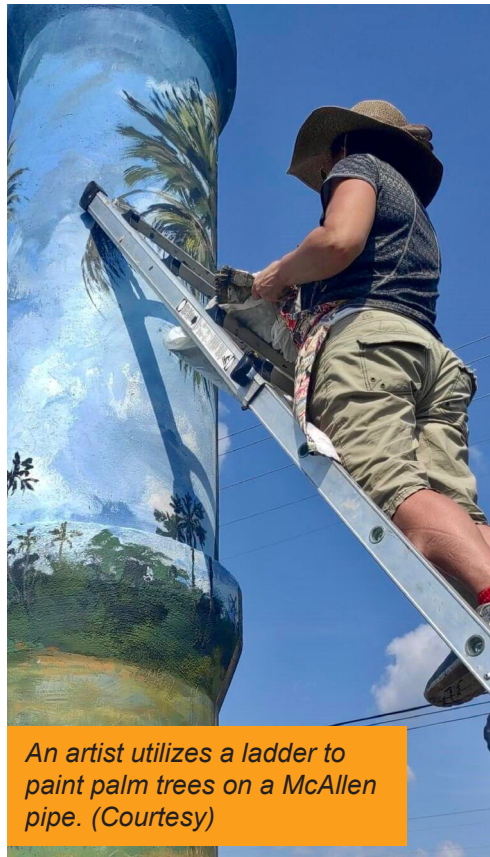


nonprofit organization with a decades-long local presence and works in tandem with McAllen municipal government.

They work jointly on litter cleanup projects that included more than 1,500 volunteers in April 2023 embarking on a citywide effort as part of the Great American Cleanup day. Other Keep McAllen Beautiful projects include painting wooden homes for senior citizen residents, and working with local schools to keep campuses neat and teach students about the environment and community service.

The art on the pipes is another key project and one with widespread appeal and visibility throughout McAllen. Neighboring Valley cities have reached out to Lash and her organization to learn more about the pipes artwork in seeking to replicate similar projects in their communities.

“Do them all over your city,” Lash said as a key piece of advice to other cities. “If it’s not just in one part of town, but throughout a community, it will be embraced and supported, just as we have seen in McAllen.”



*An artist utilizes a ladder to paint palm trees on a McAllen pipe. (Courtesy)*



*Ridley sea turtles swim about on an irrigation pipe in McAllen. (Courtesy)*

# RGV

## PARTNERSHIP

### ONE REGION, ONE VOICE

# 2024

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Wishing you a year filled with new hopes, new achievements and new partnerships.



**Join us in driving the movement for 'One Region, One Voice. Scan to learn more.**



# Livestock Show 'In Blood' Of New GM

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

Luis Saldana was coming to the end of a three decades-long career with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service when a job offer came along involving the leadership of a historic organization in his hometown.

Saldana's fellow board members of the Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show approached him in early 2023 with the possibility of the general manager leadership post. Saldana grew up the son of an agricultural education instructor at Mercedes High School to go with his years of working for the Texas A&M system and being a livestock show board member.

"The opportunity presented itself and I couldn't turn it down," he said. "I grew up on these show grounds. It's in my blood."

A year into his new job, Saldana has left thoughts of retirement far behind. He is readying his staff and the show grounds for the upcoming 85th edition of the RGV Livestock Show. They are expecting up to 300,000 visitors during the rodeo's nearly two-week run in March. The 2024 edition will also have a historic first. The Cowboy Channel, which reaches over 40 million viewers over cable and satellite television, will broadcast the livestock show's rodeo events.

"It will be huge for our community and for the Valley," Saldana said of the Cowboy Channel broadcasts. "People from all over the country will be able to see what's going on in Mercedes and the Rio Grande Valley."

## Journey To Leadership

Saldana's trek to his executive director and GM job at the livestock show began as a youngster when he presented poultry, sheep and livestock on the grounds every spring just as hundreds of Valley students do today.

He went on to attend Texas A&M before embarking on a 30 years-plus career with AgriLife as a county agent and 4-H youth development specialist. Add those experiences and training to years of service as a RGV Livestock Show board member and Saldana was ready to step in and take the leadership post he now holds.

He oversees a relatively small staff of 11 employees who work throughout the year to prepare the grounds and organize the events leading up to the big spring show. Saldana and his staff also work closely with more

than 600 volunteers every spring when the big show comes around.

Beyond that, there are a steady stream of non-livestock show events to tend to every month as Saldana works to make the livestock show grounds a year-round venue. A new concert pavilion is going up to make the RGVLS grounds a go-to music venue regionally. There's also the 6,100-seat rodeo arena that can host more than cowboy-themed events and exhibit halls that can be ideal for weddings, quinceañeras and meetings.

"We find ourselves in a unique position to use our venue as much as possible," Saldana said. "The venue has grown and become an even more valuable resource."

## Historical Connections

Saldana is well attuned to the long history of the livestock show and its connection to

Mercedes.

He pulls out a folder with a directors meeting document from September 1939 at the beginnings of what would become the RGV Livestock Show. The show then was "the Rio Grande Valley Livestock and Agricultural Exposition." Another historical document from February 1940 shows \$1,000 had been raised "to defray the expenses of show." In 2023, the livestock show raised \$1.7 million for scholarships and awards for students participating in show presentations featuring livestock, poultry, rabbits and other animals they have raised for sales.

Agricultural education remains as the core mission of the livestock show. All of the improvements being made to improve the show grounds to make it a more viable venue for additional events go back to raising funds to help area youth involved in agricultural



*Luis Saldana grew up in Mercedes as a student participant in the RGV Livestock Show and now leads the organization. (VBR)*



activities. Saldana also hopes to use the big yearly March event as a means to make Valley residents more aware of the role agriculture has played and continues to play in the region's history and well-being.

"We want to build a bridge to people who don't have any connection to agriculture so they can understand the impact agriculture has had in their communities," he said.



Agricultural education and student participation in those endeavors remains the core mission of the RGV Livestock Show. (Courtesy)



This year's livestock show will be the 85th edition with events broadcast nationally on The Cowboy Channel. (VBR)



**\$50K**

**IN CASH, PRIZES  
& JACKPOTS**

# WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP 2024 BBQ COOK-OFF

**FEBRUARY 9-10, 2024**

**RIO GRANDE VALLEY LIVESTOCK  
SHOWGROUNDS - MERCEDES, TEXAS**

## CBA CATEGORIES

Chicken  
Pork Spare Ribs  
Pork  
Brisket

## TEAM REGISTRATION

\$300 - Team (Renewal) - Dec. 15-30  
\$300 - Team (Early) - Dec. 31-Feb. 1  
\$350 - Team (Late) - Feb. 2  
\$50 - Jackpots (Each)

**FOR MORE INFO VISIT: [SMOKINONTHERIO.COM](https://smokinontherio.com)**

Sponsored in part by



city of  
**mercedes**

Sanctioned by



**#SMOKINONTHERIO**



# Winter Texans Open Hearts To RGV

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

The roughly 100,000 Winter Texans in the Rio Grande Valley do more than enjoy each other's company at social events and spend their dollars at local restaurants and stores.

They also give back to Valley communities. Winter Texans do so through their volunteerism benefitting hospitals, schools and nonprofit organizations. Many provide financial donations as well in supporting a wide variety of worthwhile efforts and projects in the RGV.

Kristi Collier is the president and chief executive officer of Welcome Home Rio Grande Valley, a company that provides Winter Texans with an array of services and products. Collier is at the forefront of studying the economic and social impact Winter Texans make on their Valley communities. The aspects of volunteerism and philanthropy as provided by Winter Texans deserves more intensive study, she said.

"It's no secret that Winter Texans volunteer, whether it be in their RV resort or in the local community, but the impact of this seasonal manpower has gone unmeasured," Collier said. "I feel that is such an important piece of the puzzle that we have added questions to our economic impact study to try to find out just how much they contribute."

## 'Happy They're Here'

Collier wants to dig deep in determining not only the time donated by Winter Texans with volunteerism, "but where, as well as measuring donations, whether they be cash or in kind."

All of that is to be precisely determined. In the meantime, those on the receiving end of Winter Texan volunteerism and financial donations already know what they mean to RGV communities.

"We're happy they're here," said Commander Robert Martinez of the Brownsville Police Department while attending a recent event at a local RV park. "They open their hearts to our community. They are not originally from here but they're part of the community."

All of that was evident during an early December soup dinner night at the 4 Seasons RV Resort in Brownsville.

Park resident and auctioneer Bruce Henderson stood before a roomful of fellow

Winter Texans. He was on a mission to sell toys back to the residents who had previously purchased the Christmas gifts at area stores. It's all part of a yearly fundraiser and auction at 4 Seasons, an annual event at the Brownsville RV Park since 1982. The park's manager Joanna Keller calls it "the most important event for our park every year."

And it's all to benefit the children of Brownsville who live in low-income neighborhoods and who count on the donated toys to brighten up their Christmas. The 4 Seasons residents buy back the toys they previously purchased and the items are then donated to the police department for direct distribution to local youth. The funds raised during the auction are also given to the police department and its dedicated holiday fund to buy Brownsville children Christmas gifts. The park donated \$7,000 and toys to the police department in 2022.

"They show a lot of kindness for our kids," said Martinez while Henderson enthusiastically auctioned off the toys at bids

three or four times greater than actual store value. "It just goes to show how much they do and how important Winter Texans are to our community."

## Making Kids Smile

Wayne Morrison's mother, Gloria Laney, was among the three founders of the 4 Seasons toy drive in the early 1980s.

Morrison is now a 4 Seasons resident himself and noted the event also includes baked goods like cakes and pies made by park residents. They sell the baked goods to each other for over \$100 a piece to raise additional funds for the local holiday toy drive.

"The auction is such fun," Morrison said in a written account of the auction's history. "There is always friendly but serious rivalry between bidders that provides lots of laughs."

The end goal is always the same. The 4 Seasons residents want Brownsville kids to have a happy Christmas.

"It's wonderful to see the faces of the kids



*Auctioneer Bruce Henderson takes bids during an auction at 4 Seasons Resort RV to benefit a local toy drive administered by the Brownsville Police Department. (VBR)*



when they receive their gifts,” said Mary Kaye Derring, a 4 Seasons resident and activity director at the park. “It’s something that’s really important to us. We talk it up at our meetings and everyone joins in to help.”



Winter Texans are known for their volunteerism and philanthropy, such as a recent event in Brownsville to donate toys and funds to benefit local children. (VBR)



The residents of 4 Seasons RV Resort in Brownsville gather yearly for a soup supper and fundraiser to benefit children in Brownsville during the holidays. (VBR)



**WANT TO EXPAND YOUR BUSINESS?**

**AEDC Small Business Grant**  
up to \$7,500  
Store Front improvements, Signage, Repair and Renovations, Limited Equipment purchases.

**AEDC Revolving Loan Fund Program**  
\$10,000 to \$150,000  
Working Capital, Start-up Cost, Construction, Repair and Renovations, purchase of Property, purchase of Equipment, Business Expansion.



956-787-6622



www.alamoedc.org

# DAVIS EQUITY REALTY

**UP TO 4,518 SF RETAIL SPACE AVAILABLE  
WESLACO TOWN CENTER**



Excellent retail space available in the Weslaco Town Center Retail Shops.  
Join McAllen Medical Center Physicians, Mariscos Restaurant & more!

## PRIME LOCATION! HIGH TRAFFIC!

Area Tenants: Cinemark Theaters, Starbucks, Hampton Inn, Applebee's, Dollar Tree and more....  
Annual Triple Nets (NNN) are approximately \$5.28 psf  
Only Lease Space Available

**LEASE RATE: \$18.00 SF/yr • BUILDING SIZE: 21,085 SF  
LOCATION: 2017 W. EXPRESSWAY 83 • Weslaco, Texas 78596**

2300 W. PIKE BLVD. SUITE 101 • Weslaco, TX 78596  
info@davisequity.com • www.DavisEquity.com  
(956) 969-8648



# Couple Finds Balance With New Business

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

Abraham Feliz travels all over the world monthly as a UPS cargo pilot flying 747 jets.

McAllen is Feliz's home base where he lives with his wife, Valerie, and their two young children. Feliz flies out the midpoint of every month from his home city on a UPS plane or a commercial jet to Louisville. From that Kentucky city, Feliz will help pilot UPS jets to Hawaii, then to Australia and Asian countries. He then makes his way to Germany on the last overseas global stop before heading home.

Feliz is traveling two weeks a month. He returned home to more than his family with the November 2023 opening of a Teriyaki Madness restaurant he and Valerie own and operate. They are navigating the first few startup months of managing a busy business.

"I never thought I'd be doing this," Valerie Feliz said just after a lunch rush at the North 10th Street restaurant in McAllen. "This is a new endeavor for us."

## In With the New

Attracting the couple to Teriyaki Madness was the Denver company's training and support. It is one of the fastest-growing fast casual restaurant chains in the country. Teriyaki Madness has added 50 new restaurants nationally in 2023, including the one in McAllen. The restaurant features customizable bowls with items such as chicken or steak teriyaki mixed with different types of rice, noodles and vegetables.

The menu of Japanese-style bowls appears to be one many local residents are willing to try and are enjoying, if the first months of business are any indication. The Feliz couple is very happy with the reception to the first Teriyaki Madness location in the Rio Grande Valley. They also acknowledge their share of operational glitches common to a startup business.

"You're the owner," Abraham Feliz said. "We're always asking ourselves, 'What improvements do we need to make?'"

## Applying Skills

Abraham and Valerie were new to being business owners and did not have a background in the restaurant industry.

What they did have were some equity with properties and real estate. They also possess the skills learned in their respective

professional careers. Valerie Feliz is a longtime educator, starting as a classroom teacher and, over time, rising to become a public schools system administrator. She was trained to create and follow procedures and processes. She also had deep experience in human resources and managing staffs upon becoming a business owner.

Abraham Feliz as a pilot is likewise precise in following steps and procedures in going through all of the systems required to fly large jets. These backgrounds and skills of their respective careers have been useful in starting up a restaurant from scratch as new franchisees. All of those skills and more are imperative to overcome the challenges of Abraham being away two weeks out of every month. It leaves Valerie back home to

manage the couple's new restaurant while also caring for their two young children, each under the ages of five.

"Women in the workforce face so many challenges," Valerie Feliz said in recounting the difficulties of maintaining work/home balance after the births of her children. "Leaving my profession was so hard for me after all of the years I put into it but having this business gives me more flexibility in caring for my children."

## Facing The Competition

Abraham Feliz first tried a bowl from the Teriyaki Madness menu in Hawaii on a stopover during his FedEx global flights.

The healthy fresh food concept of chicken, steak or salmon with noodles and vegetables

*Valerie and Abraham Feliz are bringing skills learned from their respective professional careers into the running of their new restaurant in McAllen. (VBR)*





in a hot tasty bowl is an option he thought would be a unique choice among the bevy of restaurant choices in the Valley. On North 10th, just past Trenton Road, Teriyaki Madness finds itself in the midst of chicken, hamburger and sit-down restaurants touting the names of well-known restaurant chains.

Abraham and Valerie are hardly deterred in facing so much competition for the restaurant dollar, but they are straightforward in recounting times of computer crashes when their restaurant's registers went down or when supplies were late in arriving. They approach those challenges with positivity and

are appreciative of being part of a promising business enterprise.

"We were amazed by the amount of work that went into opening," Abraham Feliz said. "We got to our goal. Now it's making adjustments and improving upon what we do."



Cooks prepare bowls for waiting customers at Teriyaki Madness in McAllen. (VBR)



It's a busy lunch hour rush at the new Teriyaki Madness in north McAllen. (VBR)

**SAN BENITO IS OPEN FOR BUSINESS!**



- International Access
- Fast Track Permitting
- Available Land

701 N. Bowie Street,  
San Benito, TX 78586  
(956) 626-1350  
info@sanbenitoedc.us  
www.sanbenito.us



**Economic Development Corporation**



# Mission Looks Ahead To Bridge Improvements

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

The City of Mission comes into a new year with expectations of having commercial trucks crossing a nearby international bridge by the end of 2024.

The Anzalduas International Bridge is located just south of Mission. It is going through a revamping as the necessary facilities are constructed that will allow for the inspection and processing of commercial truck traffic. When completed in the fourth quarter of 2024, the city's economic analysts say up to 2,000 trucks a day will cross Anzalduas daily.

"We're looking forward to it," said Teclo Garcia, the chief executive officer of the Mission Economic Development Corporation. "This will be a first for Mission. That traffic is going to drive investment."

Garcia came to Mission from Laredo where as an economic development specialist, he was heavily involved in international trade at the nation's largest inland port crossing.

"Laredo is a monster," Garcia said of the over \$240 billion in imports and exports that go through the city yearly. "They're saturated. Hopefully, we can pick up some of that traffic."

## Competing Regionally

Mission is angling to take a strategic approach in positioning itself among the international bridges in western Hidalgo County.

The Pharr-Reynosa International Bridge has developed into a huge crossing point for produce and all types of agricultural products originating in Mexico and Latin America. Since 1996, all northbound trucks from Reynosa have crossed in Pharr as the bridge at Hidalgo has become more oriented to passenger traffic.

In that mix, Mission would like Anzalduas to be a mix of passenger and commercial traffic that connects to the western outskirts of Reynosa. Garcia anticipates the commercial truck traffic at Anzalduas leaning heavily toward the auto industry.

"Parts, plastics, tires, anything to do with auto," he said. "This is a great opportunity for all of our communities."

The Anzalduas bridge is owned by the cities of Mission, Hidalgo and McAllen, with the latter responsible for the daily operations. Garcia sees the upgrade at Anzalduas as one

piece of a much larger picture forming in the competition for international trade. Tesla is establishing large manufacturing facilities in Austin and Monterrey, and improvements to bridges in the Rio Grande Valley fortifies the region to better compete in a global arena.

"This is a great regional opportunity," he said. "You look at regions and how we can compete in Texas and Mexico against China and Brazil."

## Adding Diversity & Opportunity

Garcia's focus in his first year as the EDC's chief executive has also focused on

revitalizing the organization's Center for Education and Economic Development and bolstering small business development in Mission.

The CEED is a 55,000-square-foot facility that houses the EDC's administrative office as well as a variety of tenants connected to job growth and education. The energy and volume of activities in the facility had waned in recent years. In 2023, Garcia and his staff added quality tenants to mainstays like the 5X5 Brewing Company and the Jitterz Coffee Bar.

New tenants at the CEED include RGV

*Mission EDC chief executive Teclo Garcia says new commercial truck traffic will bring the city new opportunities. (Courtesy)*





Healthy Vending and Brand Geniuz. There are now also educational and economic development operations like the satellite offices of UTRGV, Wayland Baptist University and most recently the Valley Grande Institute, which is focused on nurse training and health career careers. South Texas College also plans in 2024 to establish a wing of its apprenticeship program at the CEED.

"The new tenants have added diversity and new opportunities for the people of Mission," Garcia said.

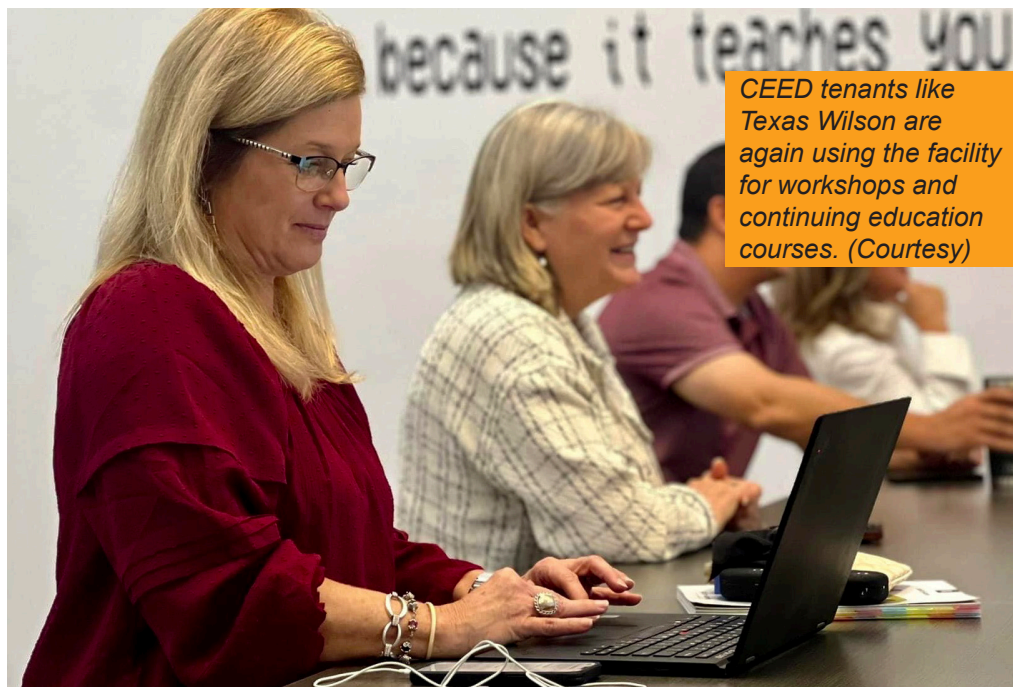
The Mission EDC has also relaunched its Ruby Red Ventures program. The initiative provides up to \$15,000 per local small business for facility improvements, working capital and expansions. Garcia said the EDC may add a pitch component to the program in which applicants make presentations for their startup businesses before a panel of judges.



Valley Grande Institute ownership and the Mission EDC celebrate the grand opening of the Weslaco-based health careers school's new operations at the CEED in Mission. (Courtesy)



The Mission EDC is actively promoting the improvements at the Anzalduas International Bridge at trade shows and other recruitment events. (Courtesy)



CEED tenants like Texas Wilson are again using the facility for workshops and continuing education courses. (Courtesy)

## U.S. Customs Broker Ocean Freight Forwarders

We know the rules to move your goods to Mexico and the World. Automatic electronic communication gives you up-to-date status of shipments.  
A full service company providing solutions to your logistics needs. ISO 9001 Certified 2008 Standards.



**PARKER & COMPANY**  
WORLDWIDE

U.S. Customs Brokers • In-House Mexican Brokers • International Forwarders Warehouse & Distribution • Truckers • Custom Consulting • Agent Network Worldwide

Brownsville (956) 831-2000 • McAllen/Hidalgo/Pharr (956) 843-8989 • Laredo (956) 728-9000 • Corpus Christi 1-888-831-4130 • Monterrey, Mexico (52) 81-8320-6163  
[www.parkerandcompany.com](http://www.parkerandcompany.com)



# Brownsville District Attracts Visitors

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

The 150,000 visitors who streamed into the Holiday Village Brownsville to celebrate the Christmas season meant more than enjoying the merriment of December.

It reaffirmed again just how far the renovation of Dean Porter Park has come over the last two decades and the rise of the Mitte Cultural District in Brownsville. The park and district are intertwined in being located next to each other. The whole area where Ringgold and 6th streets intersect includes the Gladys Porter Zoo, the Camille Lightner Playhouse, the Brownsville Museum of Fine Art and the Children's Museum of Brownsville. With the park in the midst of it all, the area has blossomed into a thriving arts and cultural district.

"You can combine a visit for one

(destination) with other activities here," said Laurie Ray, the chairperson for the committee overseeing the Holiday Village, a collection of cottages that go up every Christmas season at Dean Porter.

In a comment about the Holiday Village that could apply to the Mitte District, Ray says, "We have something for everyone."

## Community Spirit

The creation of the Holiday Village is representative of the community spirit in Brownsville that has revitalized Dean Porter Park and established the cultural district.

The Holiday Village is an all-volunteer effort that began in 2010. For six weeks – beginning Thanksgiving week and going through New Year's Day – Dean Porter

comes alive with nearly three dozen cottages filling up the green space between the Lightner Playhouse and the Children's Museum. The cottages are eight-to-10 feet high at their base and go up to 14 feet high. The designs include traditional Christmas in colors and ornaments to go with visuals of Brownsville history like one representing the home of the city's founder, Charles Stillman.

A local architect, Roberto Ruiz, provides cottage designs at no charge. A local nonprofit, YouthBuild, does the construction work. What started with 10 cottages in 2010 grew to 34 in 2023, with two more planned for the 2024 holiday season. Ray sees the success of the Holiday Village as a reflection of the decades-long work of community leaders like Mellena Conner in revitalizing



*The Mitte Cultural District is named in honor of a Brownsville native whose financial generosity led to the creation of the district and restoration of the Dean Porter Park. (VBR)*



the park along with the contributions of the Mitte Foundation to develop the green spaces between 7th and 6th streets.

“It’s bringing a lot of people from all over the Valley,” Ray said of the attractions now found at Dean Porter Park, the next-door zoo, and the emerging cultural district.

### Giving Back

The park’s restoration since 2000 and the subsequent development of the cultural district flows from the funding and contributions of the Roy F. & Joann Cole Mitte Foundation.

Roy Mitte grew up in Brownsville in the 1930s and 1940s and loved going to Ringgold Park as it was known before being renamed years later to Dean Porter. He would go on to success and wealth in the insurance industry and resided in Austin. He never forgot his hometown. Before his death in 2007, Mitte made sure a foundation named in honor of him and his wife would invest in Brownsville.

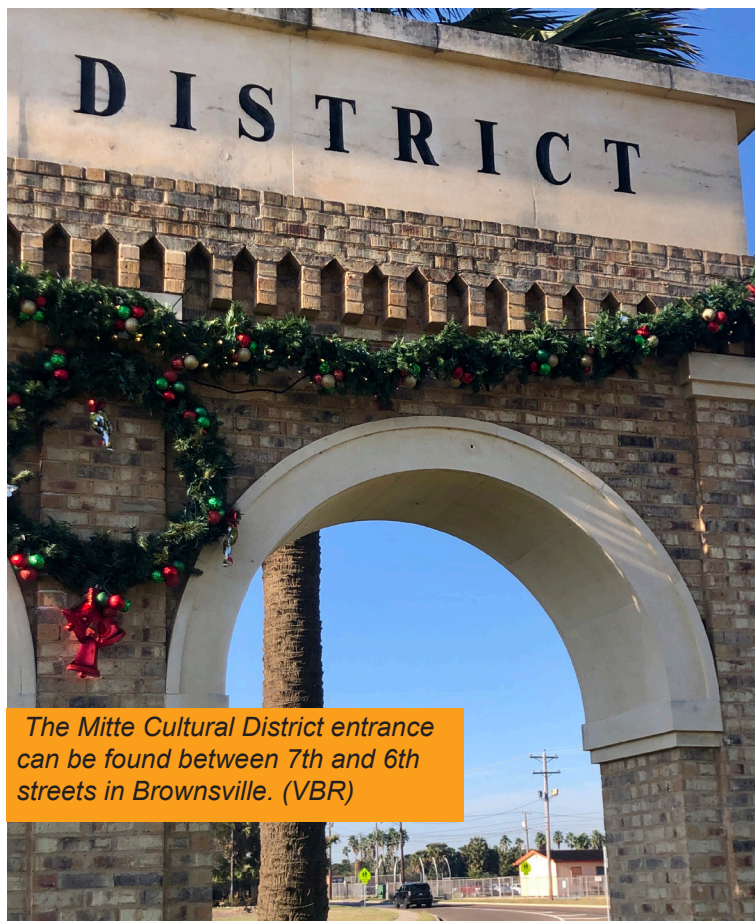
The Mitte Foundation was a primary contributor to the improvements made to what he knew as Ringgold Park. Conner was a key community leader in raising

funds for the restoration of the historic park, which is across the street from the zoo. Today, Holiday Village is one of the beneficiaries of the park’s restoration, as is the Children’s Museum, which was built in the early 2000s in a northeastern corner of the park.

A new phase of the cultural district is underway with the construction of the Brownsville Cannery Public Market. It will be an indoor market located between 7th and 6th streets and will serve as a venue where vendors and shoppers can go for fruits and vegetables year-round.



*Farmers markets are among the events at the Mitte Cultural District that are attracting local residents and tourists to Brownsville. (Courtesy)*



*The Mitte Cultural District entrance can be found between 7th and 6th streets in Brownsville. (VBR)*



**WITH**  
**VTX1 Internet**  
**STAY**

**CONNECTED & PROTECTED**

- Elite Support
- Premium WiFi
- Built in Cybersecurity
- Speeds Starting @ 300Mbps\*
- Prices starting at \$59.99\*

**1.844.GET.VTX**

**WWW.VTX1.NET**


\*Prices and speeds dependent on serviceability of address



The Mitte Foundation's executive director, Coleith Molstad, has called Brownsville "a jewel in Texas that a lot of people don't know about," with the improvements made possible by the foundation going toward attracting more tourists to the city. The future with the cannery market is sure to do that along with present attractions like the seasonal Holiday Village.




*Sculptures of children playing are among the features at the restored Dean Porter Park in Brownsville. (VBR)*





**EDINBURG**  
Economic Development Corporation

# FIND EVERYTHING IN EDINBURG



**BERT OGDEN ARENA**

**EDINBURG  
ace**

**RAUDEL GARZA**  
Executive Director

[raudel@edinburgedc.com](mailto:raudel@edinburgedc.com)  
(956) 388-8914

**EDINBURGEDC.COM**





**REGISTER TODAY!**

**VBR E-BRIEF**

**[www.valleybusinessreport.com](http://www.valleybusinessreport.com)**

Visit our site and click on the button.  
It takes seconds to register and it's free!

**VBR**



**[info@valleybusinessreport.com](mailto:info@valleybusinessreport.com) • [www.valleybusinessreport.com](http://www.valleybusinessreport.com)**





# HAPPY NEW YEAR!

**INQUIRE TODAY ABOUT 2024  
MULTIMEDIA ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS.**

[todd@valleybusinessreport.com](mailto:todd@valleybusinessreport.com) • [www.valleybusinessreport.com](http://www.valleybusinessreport.com)

Packages include print & online including site, VBR e-Brief and B2B social media.

# VBR



[info@valleybusinessreport.com](mailto:info@valleybusinessreport.com) • [www.valleybusinessreport.com](http://www.valleybusinessreport.com)