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By Todd Breland

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

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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. 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

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Dynamic Entrepreneur Creates BBQ `Nation`

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

The first time Lamar Jones saw his bottles of gourmet barbecue sauce lined up on the shelves of an H.E.B. store he felt like a musician hearing one of his songs on the radio for the first time.

“It was surreal to see it,” Jones recalled of that 2016 memory. “To see something I started making in my kitchen and then developing it to a brand being sold at

H.E.B., it was a huge deal, man.”

Today, The Jank Gourmet BBQ Sauce products that are Jones’ creations can be found in 270 H.E.B. stores in the United States and Mexico. The musician-turned-entrepreneur says he grew up in south Florida “around great food and women who could cook.”

He was a longtime kitchen dabbler of

store-brought barbecue sauces. Jones would add ingredients and tinker with flavors and improvise in creating new sauces. His concoctions began gaining admirers among family and friends. Living in Weslaco, Jones said “the wheels began turning” on the notions of taking his BBQ sauces from his kitchen to much bigger platforms.

“What if?” he recalled asking himself.



Lamar Jones and his “Jank Nation” barbecue products can be found in nearly 300 H-E-B stores in Texas and Mexico. (VBR)

“What can I do with what I’m making?”

Getting Started

Jones would start in 2009 with a business incubator program at the McAllen Chamber of Commerce.

It marked the beginning of a seven-year process that would lead from Lamar the kitchen chef to a businessman whose products today are manufactured at a Houston facility. It’s where H-E-B trucks arrive weekly to pick up his varieties of BBQ sauces for eventual delivery to stores across Texas and elsewhere, with a stop at his hometown H-E-B on Texas Boulevard.

“Preparation meets opportunity,” Jones said, citing one of his business mottos.

Jones was born in New Jersey and raised in Little Haiti of Miami.

A turning point in his life came in 2008 when he visited the Rio Grande Valley for the first time. Jones came as a musician to perform at a concert. He visited Weslaco during that trip and met with school district administrators to discuss how music and arts can improve the social skills of students.

Jones didn’t fully realize it at the time but would come to find that he had found a new home. The “laid-back hometown feel” of Weslaco appealed to him. He was hired by the local school district as an instructor to work with special needs children. Jones brought his south Florida influences with him to the Valley, including his love of barbecue sauces.

The yearning to do something entrepreneurial with his BBQ sauces is what took him to the McAllen Chamber’s program for startup businesses. It’s where he began to get the lay of the land of what it takes to make a product successful, from its product quality to marketing to sound business planning.

Jones progressed and excelled to the point that he won a \$10,000 seed money grant from the McAllen Chamber, a development he called “life-changing for me.” Another major milestone came a few years later when he entered a yearly H-E-B program to recognize Texas-created startup brands in the food industry. With his trademark energy and passion, Jones took what he calls “The Jank Nation” to H-E-B corporate executives. His BBQ sauces were selected as one the company’s “Primo Picks.”

doing,” he said. “Now I had the eyes of H-E-B on me.”

He wouldn’t win one of the three top spots in H-E-B competition, but Jank and his south Florida-influenced/RGV-created BBQ sauces had made an impression.

“It wasn’t long after that when I heard

from H-E-B,” Jones said. “They wanted to do business.”

Power Brands

Nine years later, Jones and his varieties of Jank BBQ sauces and seasonings are among the top Texas-themed products to be



Lamar Jones displays his products at the one of many H-E-B stores where his BBQ sauce products can be found. (Courtesy)

found at the majority of H-E-B's locations in Texas.

Jones in May gained yet another achievement when the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley announced it was partnering with The Jank to create a Vaqueros Gourmet BBQ Sauce. It is sure to be a popular item when tailgating parties commence with the launch of UTRGV football games in Edinburg in the fall of 2025.

"Two power brands coming together" is how Jones describes The Jank's partnership with UTRGV. Throughout his successes, Jones has kept close to his adopted hometown, continuing to teach at Weslaco East High School because "it's still the most rewarding job I have."

"Strong side, east side," he says of his school's signature line.

Recently, before speaking to students at UTRGV's Center for Innovation and Commercialization in Weslaco, Jones was asked what he would share as his keys for success.

"Move at our own pace, be dynamic and do good business," he said.

And with that, the Jank Nation was ready to deliver his message.

The Jank's variety of BBQ products are found in H-E-B stores in the RGV & throughout Texas. (VBR)



Lamar Jones' BBQ sauces were chosen as an H-E-B Primo Pick as a first step in getting on the grocer's shelves. (Courtesy)



Matt's Reopens & Looks To New Opportunities

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

Isaac Smith felt more than the loss of business and the diminishment of revenues after a 2022 New Year's Day fire burned his family's 120,000-square-foot Matt's Building Material store to the ground.

"I still miss the old store," Smith said recently, sitting in the new offices of a shiny new 45,000-square-foot building where the original building sat for decades in Pharr. "I grew up in that store. It's like losing a loved one."

Smith and his family have moved on the best they can and not only have a new store in Pharr but another on the way in Harlingen. The new store is located right by the Pharr Interchange. Matt's new look includes 33,000 square feet of adjoining office and retail space for lease and a 12,000-square-foot events center. It's a campus of sorts and the new store is the main piece of the complex.

Walking into the new store feels like an updated version of the old one with Matt's employees ready to help customers.. Smith says the new Matt's "is more shopper friendly," with higher ceilings and a more open space concept. He had the store designed to put large counter areas manned by employees in the midst of retail space so customers feel free to stop and ask for help.

"We don't want to compete with the (big) boxes on what they do well," Smith said of the large corporate home improvement centers. "What we do well is service. It's our #1 priority."

Telling Stories

The new Matt's opened in mid-April and it was quite the event in Pharr.

Smith estimated about 4000 people visited the store that day to get a look at the store that rose from the ashes. The size of the Saturday, April 13 crowd at the reborn Matt's is a testament to the iconic status the brand name has in the Rio Grande Valley. The Matt's story got started in the 1960s in San Benito and opened a Pharr location in 1977. A store in Palmview in western Hidalgo County would follow in 2015.

Smith recounted a story from the April opening when an older woman came up to him and expressed happiness that Matt's was back in business. She went on to say Matt's years ago assisted in rebuilding her

home after suffering a fire of her own.

"She was in tears telling me the story," Smith said. "It was a reminder that people tend to depend on you like you depend on them."

For Smith, the reception and the size of the crowd for the store opening in mid-April goes back to what his father Danny – the patriarch of the business – preaches to his three sons at they have taken over daily operations of the Matt's stores in the Valley.

"My Dad says, 'treat everyone the same and they'll come back to you,'" Smith said.

Cameron County Expansion

Matt's is still a business driven by lumber, siding, roofing and dry wall sales, what Smith refers to as being commodity materials, the basic infrastructure of home and commercial construction.

It accounts for up to 70 percent of Matt's revenues. The remaining 30 percent of



Isaac Smith says the design of the new Matt's in Pharr is built for service with counters staffed by employees to help customers. (VBR)

the business' sales comes from doors, windows, flooring, hardware and plumbing. Unlike the big box stores where customers usually have to fend for themselves to find items, Matt's has experienced staff at its counters and on the floor to offer insights and expertise.

For now, Matt's is an Hidalgo County-heavy business with 70 percent of its revenues coming from its stores in Pharr and Palmview. Smith, however, sees Cameron County as "the Valley's next big growth spot" with the industrialization of SpaceX at Boca Chica Beach and the Rio Grande LNG plant at the Port of Brownsville. Matt's is moving to get ready for it by building a new store in Harlingen along Expressway 77, just north of Bass Pro Shop and Spur 54, where a collection of new retailing and restaurants has developed in that part of the city.

The Harlingen store will have a rail spur, which will serve as a receiving and shipping point for freight to be sold at the company's four Valley stores. The new Harlingen store is currently under construction. It will have 14,000-square-feet of retail space, with an adjoining warehousing of over 20,000 square feet to be available for storage and distribution.

Matt's Building Materials is now fully back and revitalized even as Smith admits to bittersweet feelings in missing the old store, where he says, "I knew every place to go" in growing up in the old building.

"This is where we do life," he said of himself and his brothers Jeremy and Ben and his parents, Danny and Diana. "Work is our life. We feel excitement with the new store open, plus a peace and joy that we've come back from the fire. But there's still sadness with what we lost as that old store has a spot in our hearts."



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New Chamber President Lifting Up SPI

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

Jeanette Greider’s arrival as the South Padre Island Chamber of Commerce’s new president came after a serendipitous turn-of-events in the spring of 2023.

Greider’s lengthy career in media sales and management had recently come to an end when she decided to participate in a customer service seminar given by the SPI Convention & Visitors Bureau. Greider wanted to network with others generally connected to her field of sales, marketing and serving customers. She also had long followed the SPI Chamber on social media and wanted to learn more about the Island.

It was at this event where she met Alita Bagley, the then-president of the SPI Chamber. Greider evidently left a positive impression. She learned soon thereafter Bagley was retiring and decided to pursue the job as SPI Chamber of Commerce president. Greider applied, even if her chance of getting the position was remote.

The longshot possibilities she perceived were thankfully off the mark. After interviewing, Greider was offered the job in late August 2023 and started at the chamber the following month.

“I was elated when I was offered the position,” she said. “I feel that it’s a perfect for me and how we work to lift up and advocate for our members and the Island.”

Building Relationships

Greider’s start at the SPI Chamber coincided with the organization moving to new office space on 4113 Padre Boulevard.

The new chamber office is spacious and stylish and houses Greider and two longtime staffers – marketing director Dianna Harvill and membership services director Beverley Eymard. Greider praised both employees for their service to the chamber and the community and their assistance to her in leading the organization.

She took the helm of the chamber after a months-long stint of shadowing Bagley, the former president. For Greider, the transition to working at a chamber was a smooth segue way given her many years of working as a media sales executive in engaging with small businesses. Her background in working closely with small businesses serves her well as the chamber’s president.

Relationships with small business owners is a foundational piece of chamber of commerce work in any community. The mission of the

Island’s chamber falls under that heading. Greider exudes an enthusiasm for connecting with SPI’s small businesses in laying out key goals for the nonprofit organization.

“We try to understand where they (chamber members) need help and how we can connect them to resources to help them thrive,” she said.

Key Goals

Greider and her staff encourage chamber members to use the resources of the Small Business Administration and the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Both the SBA and the UTRGV offer programs focused on assisting small business owners.

The other priorities Greider highlights for her organization are:

- Upgrading the chamber’s technological

capabilities so it can improve in-office efficiencies and devote more time to working with and serving members.

- Helping small businesses navigate matters pertaining to city government and keeping members informed about issues being discussed at City Hall that may affect members.

- Continuing to improve the chamber’s robust website, which is filled with information about Island events and chamber activities.

It also features a portal for members that is a gateway for communication, touting specials at individual businesses, and posting job openings.

- Utilize the space offered by the new 3,500-square-foot chamber building to host training sessions and meetings benefitting the Island’s business community.

Then there’s getting to all of the ribbon



New SPI Chamber President Jeanette Greider is using her background in working with small businesses in leading her organization. (VBR)

cuttings, breakfast meetings, luncheons and other events organized by the chamber. It all goes toward maintaining and improving the quality of relationships the chamber has with its members and the community at-large, which includes local governments and area school districts.

“I came in with a clean mindset,” Greider said. “I wanted to improve upon – not change – the things the chamber was doing to serve its members and the community. I love the Island and now it’s more than just loving the Island in working to help businesses succeed.”



The SPI Chamber’s new offices on Padre Boulevard have bolstered the organization’s service to its membership. (VBR)



SPI Chamber leadership and the community celebrated in recent months the official grand opening of new offices on Padre Boulevard. (Courtesy)



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SpaceX Expands Boca Chica Footprint

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

Kathy Lueders hears the question often in her capacity as general manager of Starbase's operations at Boca Chica Beach.

"When are we going to Mars?" Lueders said to an audience recently in Harlingen on the Texas State College campus. "I don't know exactly when but I do know that one day out of the Rio Grande Valley there will be a Starship going to Mars."

Lueders' talk was titled "Space Talk with SpaceX" and was hosted by the Harlingen Economic Development Corporation. In her one-hour talk, Lueders touched on a range of subjects from going to the moon and Mars to more pressing everyday concerns like improving the condition of the state highway leading to the ever-growing Starbase complex.

Lueders says what she called "Starbase Village" - a community of over 2,000 SpaceX employees and where another 1,000 contracted workers visit daily - is poised for significant expansion. A one-million-square-foot factory is under construction and will allow SpaceX to have much of what is needed onsite to build its nearly 500-foot-high Starship rockets. SpaceX plans to add a second launch pad site at Starbase. A large office building is going up to consolidate more of SpaceX's staff and employees at Boca Chica.

There will also be more housing, coffee shops, restaurants, and even dog parks to flesh out what is essentially an emerging new city in southern Cameron County. The ultimate goal is to use a once remote

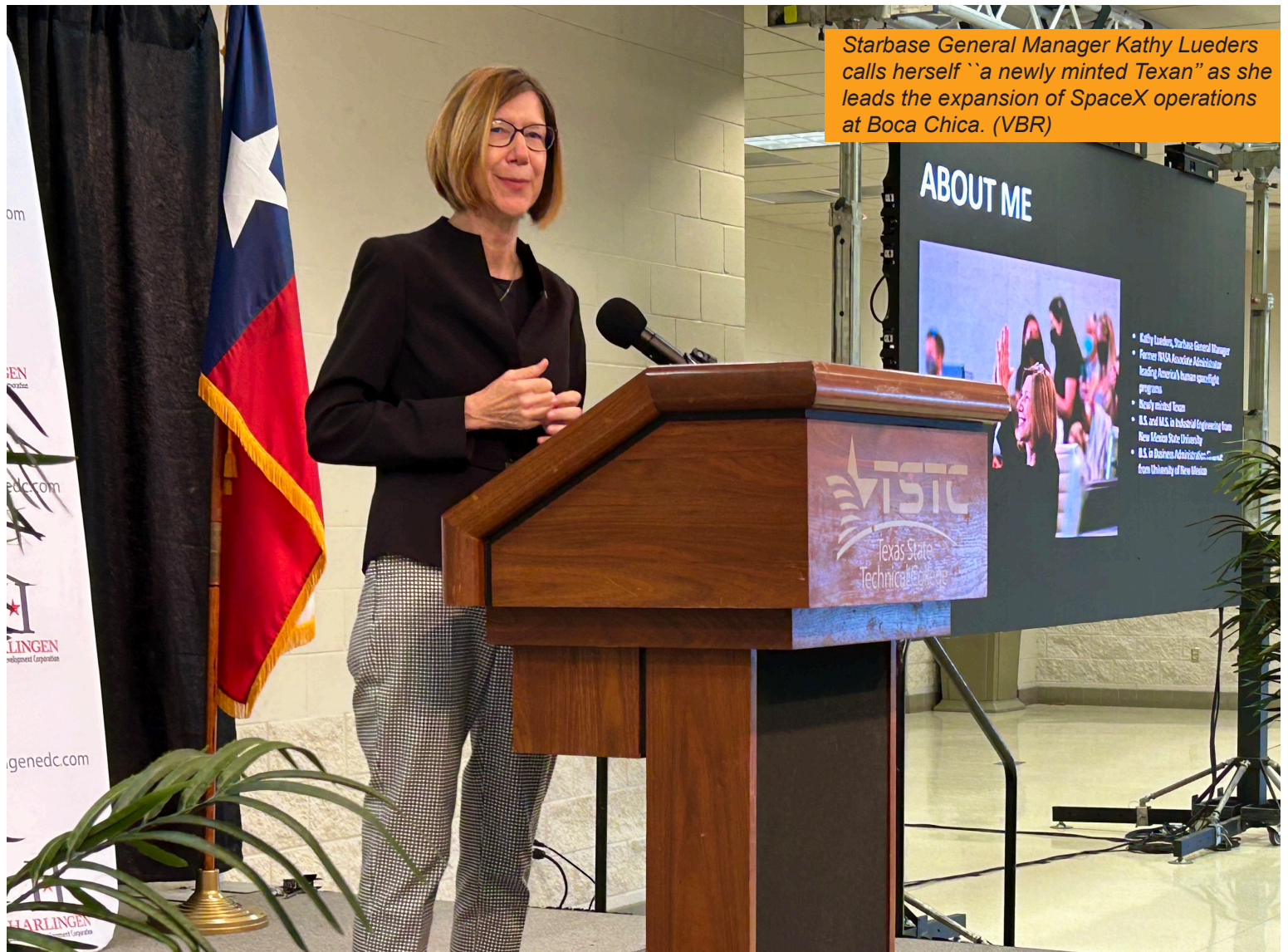
beach as the site from which designs and spacecraft are manufactured to get man back on the moon and beyond - to Mars.

"It's all to get us ready to start meeting the production (volume) and launch rates we need to reach our goals," she said.

'Gracefully Fail'

Lueders gave her Harlingen audience a bit of a history lesson.

She noted that SpaceX began building on Boca Chica almost a decade ago. It has gone through various iterations. What would become Starbase originally had relatively modest goals of being a site for research and testing. Its goals today are more ambitious with aspirations of space travel and the world's tallest rocket launch



Starbase General Manager Kathy Lueders calls herself "a newly minted Texan" as she leads the expansion of SpaceX operations at Boca Chica. (VBR)

tower looking out to the Gulf of Mexico.

SpaceX is a commercial space transportation and communications company. Its big picture aim, Lueders said, is to “get space transportation cost down to a reasonable goal,” meaning the reuse of rockets and components for more than one mission. SpaceX wants frequent launches and fast turnaround times with the capability to “return our hardware and being able to use it again,” Lueders said.

Getting to that objective means lots of testing and experimentation, and ultimately, more than a few failures. It runs counterintuitive to Lueders’ decades-long career at NASA, where she was an associate administrator. At NASA, failures were often seen as being a waste of government resources. At SpaceX, she says, the company seeks to “gracefully fail.” Its employees are trained to learn and grow from mistakes and “move on to the next thing,” as shown from its first three rocket launches at Boca Chica.

“We’re trying to build something that hasn’t been done before,” Lueders said. “From each one of our orbital missions,

Starbase’s 2,100 employees are working for frequent and lower-cost launches and space travel from its Boca Chica base. (VBR)



Starbase is developing its capacity onsite to build the world’s tallest rockets and launch pads at its Boca Chica location. (Courtesy)



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Starship’s three flight tests from Boca Chica all successfully launched and from there reached differing levels of success.

The first launch occurred on April 20, 2023 and reached an altitude of 24 miles before Starship broke up and disintegrated over the Gulf of Mexico. The second test occurred about seven months later on Nov. 18. All 39 engines of the rocket lit and there was successful separation of what SpaceX calls the super heavy booster and the spacecraft attached to it upon liftoff.

On March 14, 2024, the third launch got Starship to its first ascension to space before the spacecraft was lost during its re-entry to Earth. SpaceX is working diligently toward receiving the necessary Federal Aviation Administration approval for its fourth test launch. It hopes to do so by the end of June, Lueders said.

It wasn’t all talks of rockets and space during her talk to the Harlingen audience at TSTC. Lueders also spoke of how Starbase is working to incorporate its employees into community life. Group company activities have included beach cleanups and sea turtle rescues. Starbase employees have settled or previously lived in communities

across Cameron County. Lueders says sufficient housing is a critical need for her employees, as is improving the roadway infrastructure leading to the complex.

“How do you prepare for this type of development that wasn’t there before?” she asked of the challenges facing local and state governments in coping with Starbase’s rapid growth. “Improving traffic flow and moving supplies efficiently are critical issues for us.”

All of that and more will need to be addressed. The permanence of SpaceX in the Valley is such that Lueders flatly stated, “Starbase is going to be the home of Starship.”



SpaceX’s first three launches from Starbase have drawn large observation crowds on South Padre Island. (Courtesy)



SpaceX is aiming for its fourth test launch this summer from Starbase. (Courtesy)

VTX1 Works To Close RGV Digital Divide

The 900-foot-high KGBT tower just south of La Feria does more than just transmit television signals.

The long-standing tower is held upright by high-tensioned guy wires and is visible for several miles in a wide radius around La Feria. At about 200 feet, the KGBT tower houses a row of tile-looking squares that are providing what executives of VTX1 Companies call “the next generation of fixed wireless” Internet service. Orlando Quintanilla, the chief operating officer for the Raymondville-based cooperative, recently stood at the foot of the KGBT tower during a ribbon cutting that marked the activation of Internet service for rural communities south of La Feria.

“There are a lot of rural areas out there where people have been neglected for years,” Quintanilla said. “We felt like this was an opportunity for us to go out and expand to some new territories and provide the same quality of services we’re currently providing to our members in other parts of the (Rio Grande) Valley and South Texas.”

The La Feria project on FM 506 is one of five such projects VTX is launching with the goal of bringing affordable Internet services to wide swaths of rural Cameron County. Communities like Arroyo City, Lozano, and rural areas adjacent to the Port of Harlingen will eventually have the same sort of Internet services that were kicked off south of La Feria in early May.

Patrick McDonald, VTX’s chief executive officer, called the expansion “a significant equalizer” in closing Cameron County’s digital divide.

Point-To-Point Connections

VTX’s reach into additional rural areas is being done in conjunction with Cameron County government.

The public/private partnership is one where the cooperative is expanding its reach without any payment from the county, nor are its customers being subsidized with public resources to pay for VTX1 services. The benefits of the partnership come when the county and cooperative can jointly apply for state and federal grants to boost broadband Internet services in underserved communities.

Texas has over \$3 billion available for

such broadband equity grants. Cameron County stands a better chance of receiving such funding if it can show cooperative efforts between the public and private sectors.

“The idea is that together we can leverage monies in applying for grants,” said Cameron County Commissioner Gus Ruiz, whose precinct area includes La Feria. “In working with VTX, they have agreed to do these sorts of projects and provide the infrastructure on their dollar, at no cost to

the county, to get everyone in that radius access to affordable high-speed Internet.”

In the case of the La Feria project, that radius is eight miles. It’s a point-to-point connection from the TV tower where the VTX1 equipment sits to households in general aerial view of the KGBT tower. A device installed outside of a subscriber location receives the signal from the tower, which is then sent inside through VTX-installed cables to devices in the home.

The cost is \$29 a month, Ruiz said, which



Orlando Quintanilla, the chief operating officer for VTX1, says his company is working with Cameron County to identify rural areas in need of Internet services. (VBR)

is an affordable alternative to the much more expensive rates of large commercial carriers that are often reluctant to service rural areas.

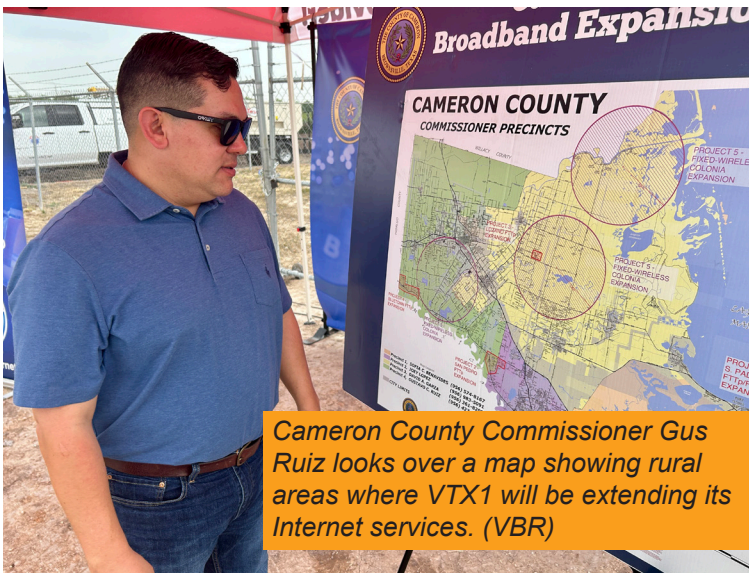
“La Feria is growing and we’re going to need more services,” said the city’s mayor, Olga Maldonado, at the VTX1 ribbon cutting. “Something like this is very much needed in our rural areas.”

Inside Track

Ruiz estimates at least 2,000 households in rural Cameron County will have access to the technology made available by VTX1 via the equipment it has installed on the KGBT tower.

For VTX1, the partnership with Cameron County means the cooperative specializing in phone, Internet and streaming services can get better insights on what rural stretches of the county are in need of Internet services.

“Having that inside track helps us to fast traffic these opportunities for developments,” said Quintanilla, the COO for VTX1. “We make sure the need is there and then we’re able to get the services to the people who need it.”



Cameron County Commissioner Gus Ruiz looks over a map showing rural areas where VTX1 will be extending its Internet services. (VBR)



VTX1 has installed equipment on at KGBT television tower near La Feria to reach rural areas in providing affordable Internet service. (VBR)

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McAllen Mechanic Gets ‘Second Chance’

By Chris Ardis

A mid-summer day in 2022 started out like any other for Cris Moreno and was supposed to conclude with a joyful night out with his mother and an uncle and aunt visiting from California.

It was during that outing when another vehicle slammed into Moreno’s GMC truck. He was badly injured and rushed to DHR Health hospital in Edinburg. Moreno is a mechanic who has owned and operated an auto service business for many years in north McAllen. It turned out that he was treated by medical professionals who knew him well.

“I just remember the trauma surgeon coming over and saying, ‘Cris is that you?’” Moreno

recalled. “The surgeon, one of my nurses and the anesthesiologists were all customers.”

Both Moreno and his mother Elma suffered serious injuries, with his mom being hospitalized for over three months. His aunt and uncle had only minor injuries.

“Second chances,” he said, with his eyes filling with tears. “God has me here working for Him.”

And he still has his mother.

An Uncle’s Influence

Moreno’s life began in Monterrey, Mexico.

His parents’ trip to visit family turned into the unexpected arrival of baby Moreno. The

family returned to their home in Detroit before moving to Pharr and then McAllen. Moreno graduated from McAllen High School in 1993.

Moreno worked for a local limousine and auto repair business during his high school years. He stayed working there after graduation. College was not on his radar even with four sisters having graduate degrees.

“School was never for me,” Moreno said. “We don’t all need a college degree. We (also) need electricians, mechanics, bricklayers and plumbers.”

Moreno speaks candidly about the challenges he faced in school and the frustration he endured because no one



Joe Rodriguez, left, and Cris Moreno work side by side as foreman and owner of Cris Auto Service in McAllen. (Courtesy)

recognized his struggles and frustration. During his childhood, Moreno spent summers at the ranch of his Uncle Hector and got exposed to entrepreneurship.

“He was my dad’s oldest brother,” Moreno said of his uncle. “He had an auto repair shop, bakeries and tortillerias.”

Moreno recalled his uncle teaching him how to whistle and passing on some unforgettable life lessons.

“He was the kind of guy who would see a car broken down on the side of the road and stop to help the person,” Moreno said of his uncle. “He would say, ‘You never know when you’re gonna be in that situation.’ I learned from him how to treat people.”

Building Relationships

Moreno also learned about the entrepreneurial spirit.

In 2009, he embraced that spirit, opening his own automotive repair shop in a pre-existing building on Trenton Road and Main Street in north McAllen.

“I only had \$1500, which covered the rent, electricity and deposit,” Moreno said. “But Marty Charles, Dora Brown and David Guerra



This masterpiece on Cris Moreno’s head, created by a trauma surgeon at DHR Health in 2022, should be titled “Second Chances.” (Courtesy)



Cris Auto Service in McAllen opens at 7:30 a.m. Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. on Saturdays, and his team immediately gets to work on customers’ cars. (Courtesy)

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from IBC Bank believed in me and helped me out.”

Despite his lack of capital, IBC approved a loan for Moreno to open Cris Auto Service. Friends at NAPA Auto Parts and O’Reilly Auto Parts gave him advice and supported him as he got his business going. One of his co-workers, Joe Rodriguez, and his brother, Mike, made up the original team. Joe Rodriguez is currently Moreno’s shop foreman.

Moreno still remembers his first customer, Josette Guerra, who is a customer to this day.

“He was just so awesome,” Guerra said. “He took very good care of me.”

Moreno’s business grew and he needed more employees and space. He moved to a McAllen strip center on North 23rd Street. In June 2022, Moreno and his team moved into a newly constructed and freestanding Cris Auto Service on North 23rd and Warbler Avenue in McAllen. Moreno attributes his success to the lessons he learned from Tio Hector and from living life.

“You have to build relationships with your customers,” he said.

Moreno explains the repair work in a way the customer will understand, attributing this to his own academic struggles and how he longed for someone to explain material to him in a way he understood.

He values supporting the community where he lives, especially the schools. During the holidays, Moreno helps families in need of clothing and food in following the spirit of his Uncle Hector.

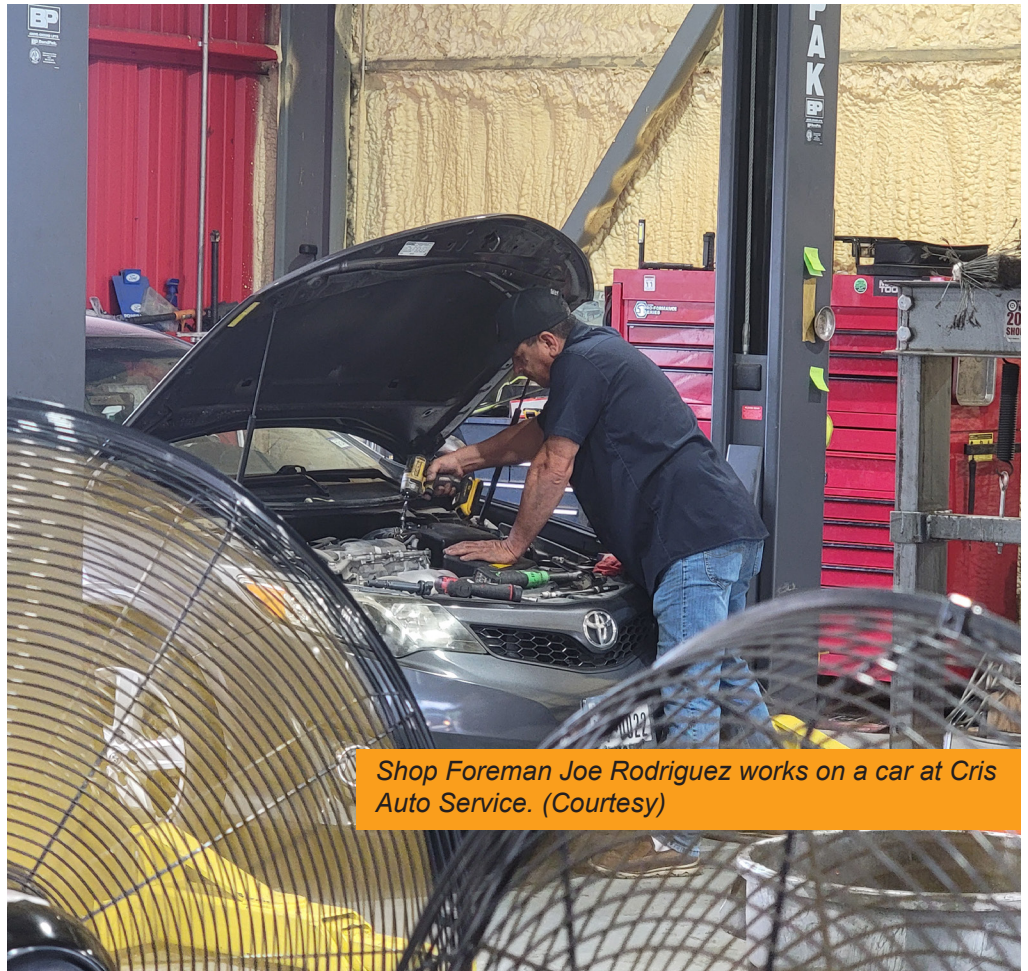
He would need that family spirit and resiliency in dealing with and recovering from the traumatic auto accident of July 13, 2022. An ambulance rushed Moreno to DHR Health, where he underwent surgery for a fractured skull. Upon leaving the hospital days later, Moreno went straight to Cris Auto Service. He had payroll to do.

“This is my baby,” Moreno said of his business. “I get to see my customers’ children in strollers and as college graduates. I have customers like Mrs. Rocha, who bakes banana bread and brings it to all of my guys, and Brent from Sweet & Tasty, who drops off baked goods.”

Lingering headaches remind Moreno of the accident, but gratitude outweighs them. Now he has that second chance to personally greet every customer who walks through the door, shadow his mechanics so he can explain their work to his customers, and build the relationships that are a hallmark of Cris Auto Service.



Wednesday, July 13, 2022, is the day Cris Moreno will always remember as his “Second Chance.” (Photo credit Cris Moreno)



Shop Foreman Joe Rodriguez works on a car at Cris Auto Service. (Courtesy)

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