

September 2025

# VBR

[www.ValleyBusinessReport.com](http://www.ValleyBusinessReport.com)  
*Your Positive News Since 2009*

# FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS SATURDAY

**Bros Boost RGV  
Bringing The Beef  
TSTC Techs Up**



# YOUR BUSINESS STARTS HERE



**40,000+ ACRES READY FOR DEVELOPMENT**

## THE PORT OF BROWNSVILLE ADVANTAGE

-  Barge & Ocean-Going Vessel Service
-  Foreign Trade Zone No. 62
-  Direct Access to USMCA Corridor
-  Heavy Haul Corridor
-  19 General Cargo/Liquid Cargo Docks
-  24/7 Secured Facilities
-  4M+ sq. ft. Open/Covered Storage
-  Skilled Workforce

**PORT OF  
BROWNSVILLE**  
the port that works

## CONTACT US

1000 Foust Road Brownsville, TX 78521  
+1 (956) 831-4592  
portofbrownsville.com



# Let The Good Times Roll

By Todd Breland

It sure does seem like this time of the year happens faster and faster. Our VBR team reflects on the early days -- paper quality was different, the publication was taller and wider, and the logo was slightly old school. From Valley Business Report consuming much of page one to now a more modern abbreviation, we've adjusted to the times.

Thanks to you, VBR is celebrating 16 years of publishing local positive news in print and online. Your local source for regional economic development news is valleybusinessreport.com. And our one-page VBR e-Brief with hot news stories and events are distributed every Thursday morning via email.

If you don't currently receive VBR e-Brief, we encourage you to spend about 30 seconds on our site to register. It's free and includes timely seminars, featured profiles and other pertinent information about our Rio Grande Valley.

When we started VBR, our late co-founder

and managing editor Kevin Knoch and I had a vision -- to connect local business and community leaders through true journalism. We knew you would appreciate and enjoy POSITIVE news about our four counties and the people who are making great things happen. Here we are -- Ricardo, John, Angey, Chris and myself -- carrying on the dream Kevin and I had the summer of 2009.

We are very grateful for your continued readership and advertising support of our online and print, pro-business and positive community news company. Please patronize VBR advertisers and featured businesses so our communities can continue to flourish. We strongly believe positivity encourages more positivity.

Deep South Texas is very special to us, and our promise is to keep sharing what makes the Valley great. That's you. Our editorial content is about you, for you, and with you. We're in this together because we are one.

We are the Rio Grande Valley.



## This September... **SWIPE TO WIN**

**Just Another Reason to Bank with LSNB**

**How to Win:** Swipe your LSNB Debit Card  
35 times this month for a chance to win \$1,000.

**Swipe Away!**



Member FDIC



1-800-580-0322



www.lsnb.com



One entry for every 35 Debit card Swipes. Only customers 18 years and older with an LSNB debit card can qualify to participate in this sweepstakes. Business debit card holders are ineligible to enter. Employees, their immediate families, or agents of LSNB are ineligible to enter. Winners will be selected from the period of 09/01/25 - 09/30/25 and will be announced at the beginning of the month of October. In order to receive the \$1,000 VISA gift card, winner must claim prize within two weeks of official announcement.

# Table Of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Down! Set! HUT!!	5
Reach For The Stars	8
Master Of Beef	10
Tech Expansion	12
Entrepreneurial Gains	15
MS Vision	17

## 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

# DAVIS

## EQUITY REALTY

### RETAIL PROPERTY FOR SALE




Unique opportunity to own and operate a business with the convenience of living next door! This 2-acre property features a 4,750 SF commercial building—formerly a used auto parts dealership and mechanic shop—along with a ±1,444 SF 3-bedroom, 2-bath home. Perfect for entrepreneurs, owner-operators, or investors seeking a mixed-use setup with Business 83 frontage. The residential home includes a two-car garage and large storage area, and is surrounded by mature trees including pecan and fruit trees. The setting offers privacy, shade, and space for further development.

**SALE PRICE: \$428,000**


**LOCATION: 3925 WEST BUSINESS 83, WESLACO, TX 78596**

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



Mission Economic Development Corporation

# YOUR MISSION STARTS HERE



INDUSTRY · CULTURE · WORKFORCE

801 N. BRYAN RD. MISSION TX, 78572

MISSIONEDC.COM | 956-585-0040

# Vaqueros Ready To Roll For 'The 956'

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

The clock was ticking down over the summer to an Aug. 30 kickoff on the sports websites of the nascent UTRGV Vaqueros football program.

A "T-minus" ticker was going until a Saturday evening kickoff under the summer lights of a converted soccer stadium in Edinburg. It was the UTRGV Vaqueros versus the Sul Ross State Lobos in the first ever college football game in Rio Grande Valley history. It was a game that culminated a long process that began in November 2021. That's when UTRGV students approved a referendum to increase the athletic fee to fund football and add the program to the

university's athletic portfolio.

From there, the work began to hire a head football coach and form a staff to begin recruiting players. A stadium needed to be found as did a conference to play in, and logos and uniforms designed to represent the orange-themed Vaqueros.

The anticipation of it all led to a sold-out venue on a late August evening at Robert & Janet Vacker Stadium. No matter the outcome of that inaugural game, UTRGV President Guy Bailey said the university and the region it serves would never be the same.

"This will transform everything," Bailey said

before the Sul Ross game. "Having a college football program will transform how people see the institution."

## History Of High School Football

The launch of UTRGV football comes in a region steeped deep in its love for the game.

High schools in the Valley have been playing football games since the early 1900s. Many of the old rivalries that endured for decades such as McHi versus Edinburg or the Los Fresnos-Port Isabel Battle of Highway 100 are now distant memories. The Valley has grown way past one high-school towns and the rivalries that



It will be 'Vs Up' at UTRGV football games in Edinburg and Brownsville as the football program begins. (Courtesy)

once gripped communities on Friday nights.

There is still some high school football intensity in the RGV. The Battle of the Arroyo pitting Harlingen High and San Benito still packs the house when the two teams play every season. Inner city rivalries such as Harlingen versus Harlingen South do the same. The over 100 years of high school football provide a sturdy foundation for the launch of college football in the region.

“We know they love their football in the Valley,” said Travis Bush, UTRGV’s head football coach, whose father Bruce was a head coach at high schools in the PSJA school district and in Donna. “And now they have a Division I (college football program) in their backyard. It has been phenomenal to watch. The excitement has continued to grow.”

### Homegrown Talent

Having a college football program will give Valley athletes a new pathway to playing the sport at a higher level. There are 12 Valley players on UTRGV’s first football roster. One of them is quarterback Eddie Lee Marburger from Sharyland Pioneer High School. He transferred from UT-San Antonio for his senior year of college ball and was considered a likely starter for the inaugural game.

“Being part of history is always a cool moment,” Marburger said in a television interview. “I had other offers, but this is where



*UTRGV is lining up its first-ever football season and its roster includes over 10 Valley players. (Courtesy)*

*Inaugural UTRGV head football coach Travis Bush comes from a family of coaches. (Courtesy)*



I wanted to be. Coach Bush’s main thing was to come home, and it’s big for me and my family, for my grandparents, to be able to see me play.”

**Ready To Play**

The Vaqueros will play in a Southland Conference that is full of Texas schools.

Some of the notable Southland schools are Incarnate Word of San Antonio, Lamar from Beaumont and Stephen F. Austin of Nacogdoches. There are also three Louisiana universities in the SLC – McNeese, Nicholls and Southeastern. The league is a Division 1 Football Championship Subdivision conference and one step down from the mega-college programs in the Football Bowl Subdivision, which include schools like the University of Texas and Texas A&M.

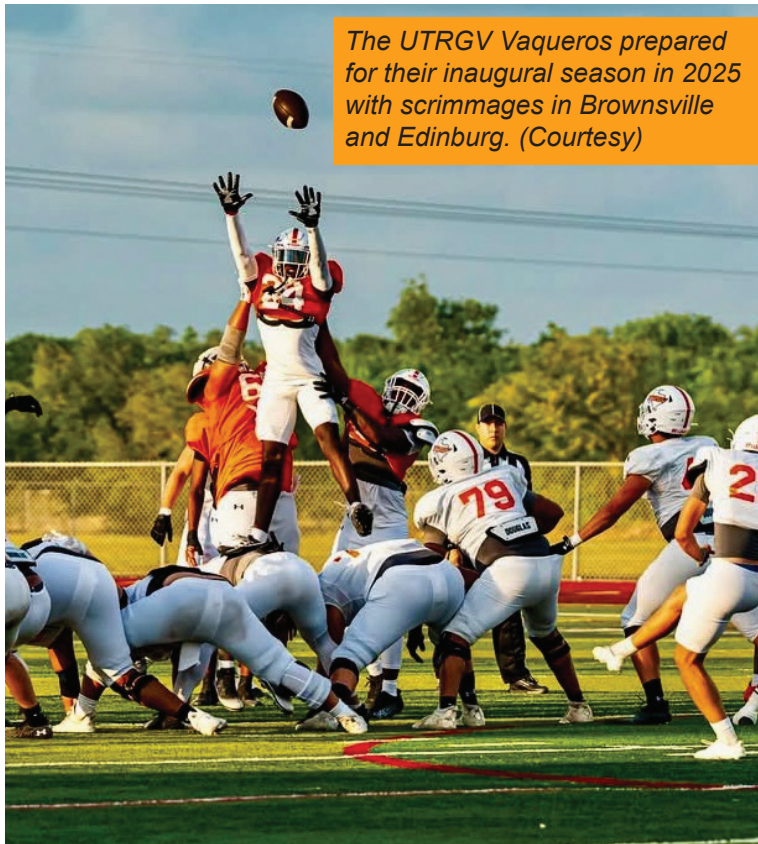
UTRGV’s roster is predominately made up of Texans with lots of freshmen and sophomores and a few upper-class transfers such as QB Marburger. The young Vaqueros may take their lumps in a Southland with well-established football programs and rosters that are loaded with juniors and seniors. No matter, the Vaqueros were ready to finally start playing real games after months of practice.

“The community has been amazing,” said Oscar Nnanna, a redshirt freshman defensive back from Cypress, a Houston suburb. “We feel like we’re doing this for the 956 and the Valley.”

*Quarterback Eddie Joe Marburger returned home to the Rio Grande Valley for his senior year to help lead the UTRGV Vaqueros. (Courtesy)*



*The UTRGV Vaqueros prepared for their inaugural season in 2025 with scrimmages in Brownsville and Edinburg. (Courtesy)*



*UTRGV students voted in late 2021 to increase fees that would lead to the funding of the university’s first-ever football program. (Courtesy)*

# NASA Specialist Gives Back To RGV

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

Samuel Garcia's career as an educator has taken him across the American South and Caribbean Islands in connecting students and teachers to the wonders of space and science.

Garcia works from his home base at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. He is an education outreach specialist representing NASA. Garcia has travelled throughout Florida, Georgia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands in conducting seminars, workshops and interactive sessions to a diverse audience of teachers and students. It fulfills a longstanding NASA pledge to reach schools and learners of all backgrounds in promoting space, the earth sciences and technology fields.

## The Local Start

Garcia got his grounding in the Rio Grande Valley before all of the space talk and instruction across distant lands. He grew up in Mercedes and began his teaching career as a geography teacher in his hometown and in the Pharr-San Juan-Alamo school district. A self-described "basketball nerd," he also coached boys' basketball teams before pursuing a master's degree at then-University of Texas-Pan American.

It was at UTPA where it was recommended he go on to earn a doctoral degree at Texas State University. Garcia would do so and his intellectual curiosity and enthusiasm for learning would take him to NASA and the stars. No matter where he has gone, Garcia has always remembered his roots and the teachers back home who inspired him.

"Our teachers really motivated us," he said growing up in the Valley. "The rigor and care they provided gave me a really good foundation. They were the role models I wanted to mimic."

## Returning To RGV

Garcia has shown that his back-home remembrances aren't all talk.

He returns to the RGV every summer. With the help of his younger brother, Steven Ray, and an ever-growing list of sponsors, he organizes what he calls an Earth X Space Celebration. The Garcia brothers and the South Texas Astronomical Society put on the third edition of this celebration in early August. Over 500 participants made it to the Mid-Valley and the Mercedes FEMA Dome for the summer event. Attendees learned about science, space and the

environment, with interactive activities and presentations geared to local youth.

Samuel Garcia draws upon his deep experiences and knowledge in organizing such an event. He is bringing to his hometown area what he has done across the South and the Caribbean in highlighting the wonders of space and science to kids. In this case, it's the faces of RGV youth lighting up with the exhibits and interactive sessions featuring the STEM topics of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

"Our students in Mercedes and the Valley are just as capable and resourceful as anywhere else in the country," Garcia said.

## 'Primed' To Grow

His assessment appears to be on the mark. The Earth X Space Celebration has grown over the last three years.

The event's first year drew about 100 participants as Garcia and his brother rolled out the idea of having the summer event. Year two featured the planetarium at John F. Kenney Elementary School in Mercedes and that event drew over 300 participants.

"It started out small but I think we're seeing it can go bigger," said Steven Ray Garcia, whose Mercedes business printed up the event t-shirts.

Bigger still was the most recent Earth X Space with over 500 participants. The event



*Samuel Garcia and Steven Ray Garcia form the "Garcia Bros" and are leading efforts to bring an annual summertime Earth X Space Celebration to the Rio Grande Valley. (VBR)*

also drew a wide array of sponsors from the Astronomical Society to Chick-Fil-A to Mayor Adrian Villarreal of Weslaco.

“The Mid-Valley is primed geographically to do things like this,” said Samuel Garcia.

**‘Leverage Background’**

Garcia hopes to “leverage my background” and work toward creating a foundation that can make Earth X Space more than a yearly event.

He envisions such a foundation hosting year-round STEM programs in the Valley and working toward granting scholarships to Valley students pursuing studies in those fields. In heading back to NASA and his Florida home, Garcia will be thinking of his hometown region and what more he and his brother can do to reach more Valley students who are interested in earth, science and space.

“Valley youth are living in some exciting times,” he said. “There are some very big opportunities in STEM-related fields. I feel like it’s important for me to come back home, serve my community, and give back.”

*Samuel Garcia, front and center, speaks to students and teachers across the South and Caribbean about science and space in representing NASA. (Courtesy)*



*Steven Garcia’s NRG Ink Screen Printing creates the T-shirts used for the Earth X Space Celebrations. (VBR)*



*The latest edition of the Earth X Space Celebration in Mercedes drew over 500 participants. (Courtesy)*



**SCARBROUGH**

UNITED STATES | CANADA | MEXICO | EUROPE

# Major Association Brings Youth Show To RGV

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

Kylie Sikes was making her way to the Rio Grande Valley and travelling down U.S. Highway 77 through King Ranch country.

“You go through so many miles of open country and then all of a sudden you see this big mix of cities in the Valley,” she said.

Sikes is the director of youth programs for the Junior Beefmaster Breeders Association. The destination in mid-July was the Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show grounds where her association would hold its junior national show. It marked the Beefmaster’s first-ever national youth show in the Valley at the Mercedes show grounds, featuring over 200 youth exhibitors and 350 head of cattle.

It’s one of those under-the-radar events that relatively few outside of an industry’s circles may know about. Take the 200 youth exhibitors participating at the national show and multiply it by three family members. It’s easy to figure that over 500 visitors staying

at area hotels and spending dollars at dining and shopping outlets produce quite an economic impact.

The national show would prove to be a success as exhibitors ranging in ages from 6 to 21 displayed their Beefmaster breed cattle and also competed in a range of other activities. They included public speaking and a quiz bowl that tested their knowledge about the cattle industry. The July 20-26 event went so well that it sparked a sentiment among Beefmaster members of wanting to return to the Valley for another show.

“Everyone had a fantastic time,” Sikes said. “The hospitality we felt from the Valley was like something we hadn’t seen before. Our membership definitely wants to come back to Mercedes.”

## Getting The Ranch Experience

The Beefmaster breed has its origins in

South Texas.

The cattle breed was developed in the Falfurrias area and has gained a foothold across the Southern United States. The Beefmasters Breeders United association is based in Bryan and works to enhance the ability of breeders to raise and promote its cattle based on the values of the organization. It actively works with major livestock shows across the country, including the RGV Livestock Show.

“We do have many members in the Valley and there was a push to go there,” Sikes said of bringing the national show to Mercedes. “We know that some of our membership in the Valley do not attend some of the shows up north, so by going down there we capture that audience.”

Sikes commended RGV Livestock show staff for working over the last year with Beefmasters in preparing for the national show. Area members pitched in with

*Students learn the responsibility of raising Beefmaster cattle in participating in national shows like the one recently held in Mercedes. (Courtesy)*



volunteers efforts to accommodate and host visiting exhibitors and their families.

“The community was extremely supportive,” she said of the Valley. “Everyone was excited to have it (national show) in South Texas.”

A highlight of national show activities was a trip to the Santa Ana Ranch near Edcouch. The ranch has been growing Beefmaster cattle since 2002. The ranch’s website says Santa Ana “has the strongest and largest herd of polled Beefmaster cattle in South Texas.” It is a breed of cattle with sleek red coats, and its proponents bill it as “the cattle of the future with their natural resilience to extreme weather and rapidly changing climates.”

### Big Responsibilities

Visiting a working ranch was a bonus for the national show participants.

Back in Mercedes, they competed with their showcased cattle along with the competitions in public speaking and knowledge-based skills. In many ways it mimicked the live competitions the students will face at livestock shows in presenting their cattle for sale. At the national show, the cattle were for display purposes only as the participants practiced their sales skills.

“It’s about being entrepreneurial and getting comfortable in front of people,” Sikes said.

The students come out of such events better prepared for future competitions. They are also continuing to acquire knowledge and carry the responsibilities of caring for and raising a Beefmaster.

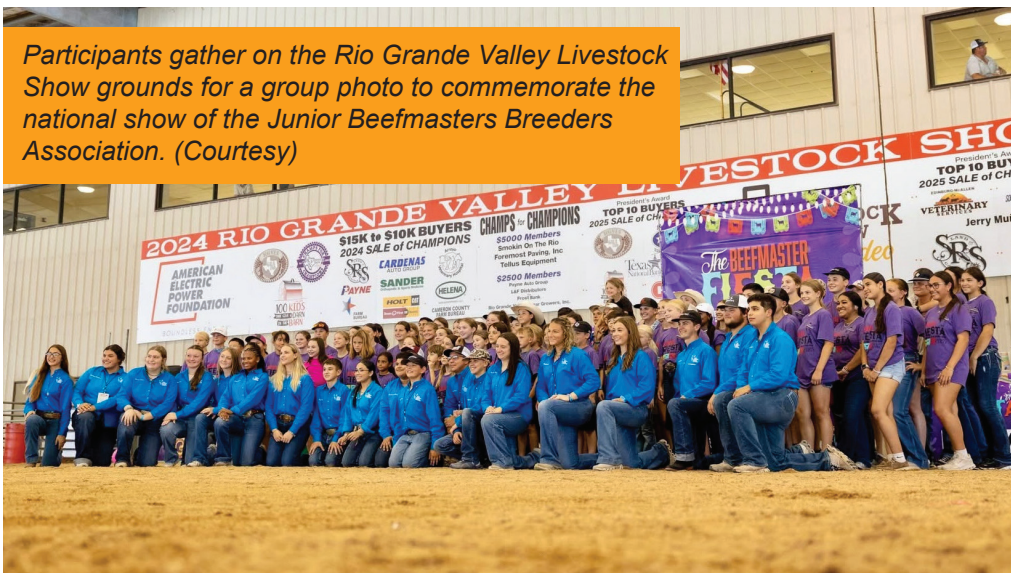
“There’s not many other projects you take on where another life depends on you,” Sikes said. “You learn a lot about responsibility and being entrepreneurial when you go to shows.”

Participants in the national show of Junior Beefmasters enjoy a variety of activities on the grounds of the Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show. (Courtesy)



Participants in the recent national show of Junior Beefmasters are challenged on their knowledge of the cattle industry. (Courtesy)

Participants gather on the Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show grounds for a group photo to commemorate the national show of the Junior Beefmasters Breeders Association. (Courtesy)



## Be the hero of Gameday!

Stream every game without fear of buffering.

- ✓ Expert installation with no equipment costs.
- ✓ Free CommandIQ App for Ultimate Wi-Fi Control.

Scan Me



# VTX1 Internet

1-844-438-8891

www.vtx1.net

\*speeds subject to availability

# Tech Center Expands TSTC's Possibilities

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

Texas State Technical College is starting a new school year with the opening of an 84,000-square-foot Transportation Technologies Center on the western end of the Harlingen campus.

The new building opens up to big spaces on the major halves of the facility. The west side of the facility will be the work and training space for students in the diesel technology field that specializes in repair and maintenance of large commercial trucks, rigs and buses. A walk to the other side of the building leads to an even bigger space. The automotive technology program will house 32 bays and 16 lifts. This is where students will learn the intricacies of repair and care for increasingly complex vehicles that are reliant on computer technology.

Miguel Zoleta, the program team lead for

TSTC's Automotive Technology program, looked over the expanse of space where students will soon be studying and working and marveled at the upgrade in facilities.

"It's super exciting," Zoleta said while overlooking the Automotive Technology space as workmen finished up the final touches of the building project in mid-August. "We're going from small spaces where we were cramped to a much bigger facility. It's going to help a lot in getting students trained and ready to take high-paying jobs in growing industries."

Beyond the big spaces where students will do the hands-on work there are computer labs and simulators as part of the curriculum that leads to one year-certification programs and associate degrees requiring two years of study. The dramatic expansion of automotive

and diesel technological programs into the bigger spaces is based on feedback and hiring patterns being seen from the private sector.

"We look at trends and where the workforce is heading," said Cindy Mata-Vasquez, the senior manager for campus enrollment at TSTC. "These are growing and very popular programs. We're one of the few schools south of San Antonio that has facilities like what we have here to go with the quality of instruction and training we offer."

## Challenging Students

Ground was broken in late 2023 for the new Technologies Center and at that time, the chancellor and the chief executive officer of the TSTC system spoke of the historic ties between the institution and the Rio Grande Valley.



*Miguel Zoleta is the program lead for TSTC's auto tech programs and says larger and updated facilities will boost the quality of instruction for students. (VBR)*



*Cindy Mata-Vasquez oversees recruiting and admissions at TSTC-Harlingen and says new facilities will give the college wider exposure to attract more students. (VBR)*

“Of all the 11 communities we serve, I can’t point to one in which the collaboration between community leaders and TSTC is stronger than it is in Harlingen,” Mike Reeser, the TSTC Chancellor, said.

What is now TSTC began in Harlingen in 1967 as Texas State Technical Institute and was among the first campuses in a statewide system. A name change occurred in 1991 when the system became known as Texas State Technical College. Over that time, the campus in Harlingen has forged close ties with private sector companies that frequently visit the college in recruiting graduates.

Zoleta mentioned Peterbilt, French Ellison, Magic Valley Electric Cooperative and Americal Electric Power as companies that have often hired TSTC graduates. On the automotive side, large dealerships in the Valley and elsewhere are eager to hire technicians



Construction work was finishing up in mid-August at the new Transportation Technologies Center at TSTC in Harlingen. (VBR)



A new Electrical Lineworker Program building are among the new facilities at TSTC in Harlingen. (VBR)

**LiftFund**  
DREAM IT. FUND IT.

**EDINBURG**  
Economic Development Corporation

**Apply today!**

# LiftFund Edinburg

**A SMALL BUSINESS  
LOAN PROGRAM**



LiftFund has partnered with the Edinburg Economic Development Corporation for an interest buy down (IBD) program. The Interest Buy Down Program (IBDP) provides small business owners in Edinburg a reduced interest rate loan at 2.5% to solve two of the biggest challenges facing small businesses: capital and cash flow.

**For more information on the eligibility criteria or how to apply, contact:**

**Marlene R. Rodriguez**

Market Director

LiftFund

220 N. 10th Street McAllen TX 78501

[mrodriguez@liftfund.com](mailto:mrodriguez@liftfund.com)

☎ (956) 299-2551

☎ (956) 645-1736



[edinburgedc.com](http://edinburgedc.com)

that can do repair and maintenance work on vehicles that are increasingly complex in utilizing computers and technology.

The 2025 fall semester in the new building will include about 100 students in the automotive technology program and up to 40 students are expected in the diesel technology program. The size of the new center will allow academic advisers like Mata-Vasquez and her staff to have office space to work more closely with students while they learn from their technical field instructors.

Zoleta, the program team lead, says students are challenged to learn the intricacies of the complex field they are aspiring to enter. While in the private sector, Zoleta said he observed new employees entering the automotive field who were not sufficiently prepared in starting their new careers.

“I saw incoming generations of students who lacked the knowledge they needed,” he said. “I feel like we can fill in the gaps of what they need to learn. With this new center, I believe we can bring in a whole new crowd of students and technicians and get them properly trained and ready to work.”

**'We're Growing'**

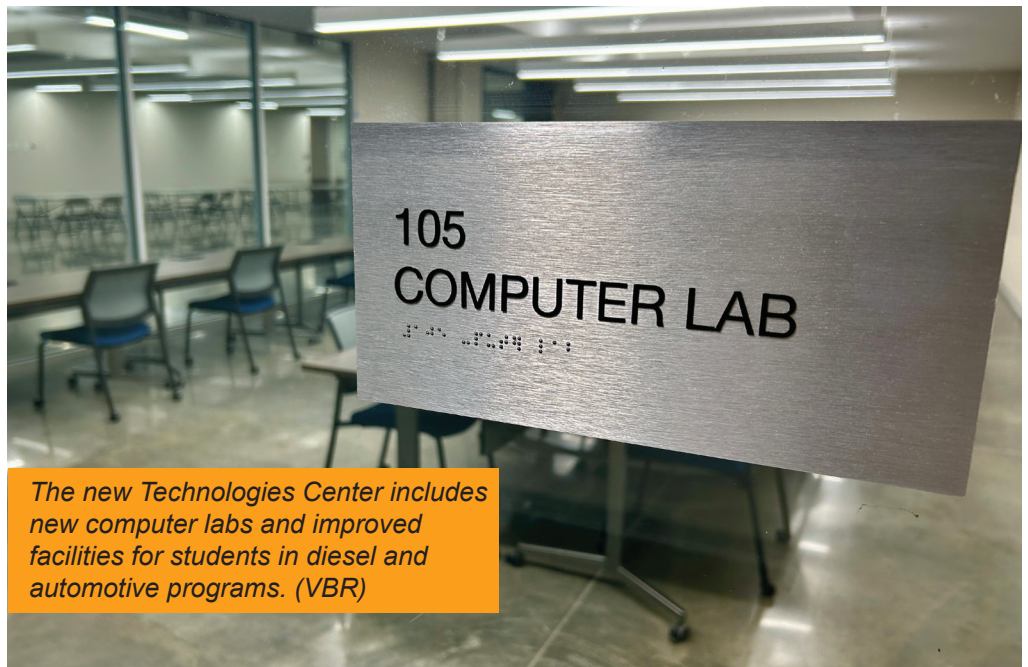
It's not only automotive and diesel technology programs that are getting improved facilities at TSTC.

Across the street from the new Technologies Center is a new but smaller facility that will house the Electrical Lineworker Technology program. Down the street is a renovated building that is the home of programs for plumbing and pipefitting technology.

“We're growing and being innovative,” Mata-Vasquez said. “These new facilities give us extra exposure when we recruit students in showing them what we have to offer.”



*The new Transportation Technologies Center at TSTC is ready to roll for the upcoming school year. (VBR)*



*The new Technologies Center includes new computer labs and improved facilities for students in diesel and automotive programs. (VBR)*



**COUNTRY INN & SUITES • 3825 S Expressway 83 , Harlingen, Texas • 855.516.1090**

# Young Entrepreneur Takes Good To Great

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

Youthful Weslaco entrepreneur Juan San Miguel knew it would take a fierce determination when seeking to start his own business.

“I had to do my best to make it impossible to say no,” he said, recalling the days of needing startup capital.

San Miguel’s ambition was to own and run his own gym. Sitting behind his desk, he smiles and recounts how he went from the framework of an idea to a Mid-Valley gym that today has hundreds of members. Top Gym is a popular spot along Expressway 83 for area residents and commuters alike.

San Miguel’s gym is an ideal Valley midpoint to stop for a workout. It was a different story over five years ago when San Miguel found an abandoned 14,000-square-foot building near the Mercedes/Weslaco boundary line and knew it was the spot to open a gym. Now he needed the funds to make his vision a reality. San Miguel went

before the board of the Mercedes Economic Development Corporation to seek the startup capital he needed.

“I stood there and I was really nervous,” he said in recalling his sales pitch.

It worked. San Miguel got the startup loan he needed.

“I thought, OK, I made it this far. Let’s open,” he said.

## Overcoming Early Challenges

San Miguel had the concept of a business before he had anything to go with it.

He traveled to Florida seven years ago with his father to purchase gym equipment at an auction. On the trip home, he recalled his father saying, “I know just the place,” as they talked about where to locate San Miguel’s would-be business. The location was at 3039 W. Expressway 83 in Mercedes, just east of FM 1015 in Weslaco. The building’s owner was McAllen businessman Hasmukh Patel,

who took a liking to San Miguel.

Acting as a mentor, the elder business owner encouraged the young entrepreneur to pursue his dreams and ambitions. Patel’s patience and guidance, when combined with the much-needed loan from the Mercedes EDC, got a gym bearing the Top Gym in 2019. Then another obstacle emerged and it came out of nowhere.

“COVID hit and we had limits on when we could be open and how many people were allowed in the building,” San Miguel recalled of the first half of 2020.

San Miguel was still renovating his building at the time. The challenge of those circumstances did not shake his faith or confidence in what he set out to do. San Miguel always knew what he wanted in a gym. The Top Gym website describes it as “a no-nonsense training environment for those who really want results.”

“No group classes, just raw, intense workouts



and a community that pushes you to be your best,” the website description continues to say.

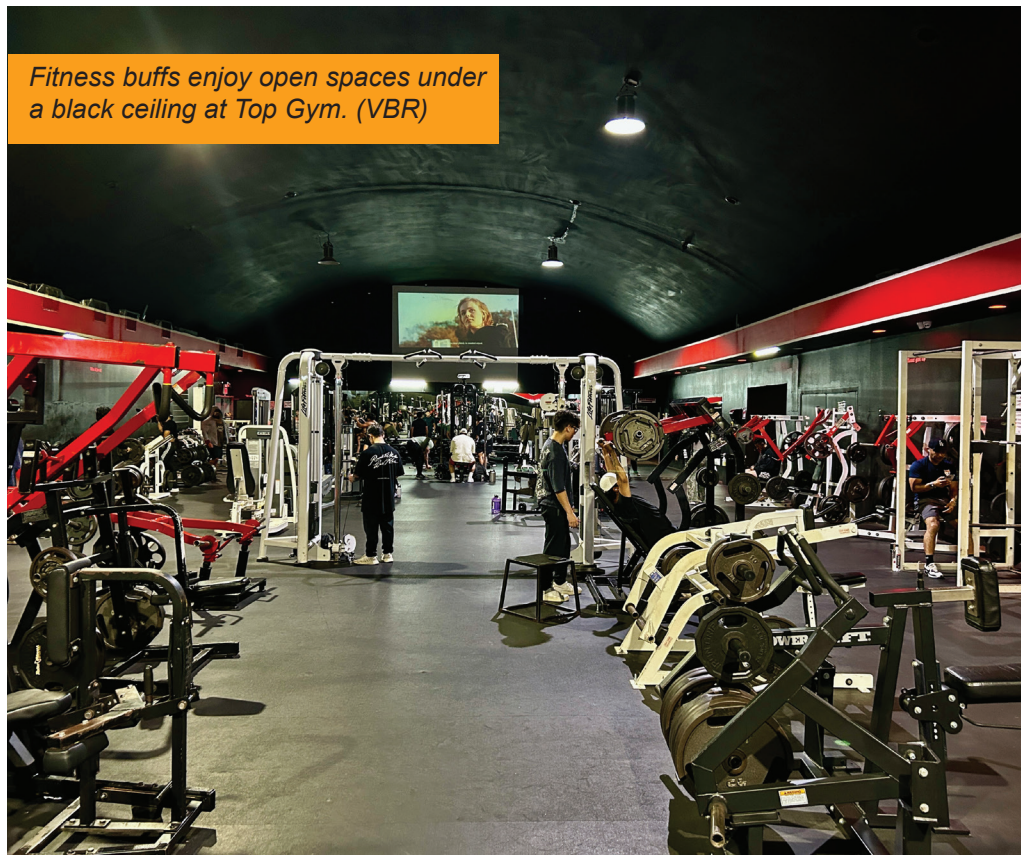
**Paying Off The Loan**

San Miguel’s big picture goal was to make Top Gym a go-to destination for serious lifters and athletes in the Mid-Valley.

San Miguel has a staff of coaches to offer customers insights and advice. Quickly fixing broken equipment and seeking and following through on customers suggestions are core Top Gym values. There are also two sauna rooms and a spacious store area up front that’s stocked with lots of merchandise.

And that loan secured from the EDC years ago? San Miguel as a now 28-years-old businessman paid that note off in mid-2025. There are new customers who find it hard to believe that he owns the gym given his youthful appearance. But he does and San Miguel is eyeing possible locations for a second gym in the Edinburg/McAllen area. He says there’s always the pursuit to improve and build up from where you are.

“The gap between good and great is getting better at small details,” he said. “People remember how you make them feel.”



*Fitness buffs enjoy open spaces under a black ceiling at Top Gym. (VBR)*



**Trusted Choice®**  
PAUL GONZALES INSURANCE

Paul Gonzales Insurance has proudly served the Rio Grande Valley for over 44 years. Founded by Pablo Gonzales Jr., the agency has grown into a family-owned and operated business with two locations in San Benito and Harlingen. Today, the agency is run by Pablo alongside his daughters, Michelle Gonzales and Evelyn Gonzales, who officially became co-owners in 2024. Together, they continue the legacy of providing dependable insurance solutions for both businesses and families. Paul Gonzales Insurance specializes in commercial trucking and business insurance, while also offering personal auto, home and other residential coverage.



105 E. Jackson  
Harlingen, TX 78550  
Phone: 956-428-4862

101 S. Sam Houston Blvd.  
San Benito, TX 78586  
Phone: 956-399-9404



*Top Gym offers a “no-nonsense training environment” in the Mid-Valley. (VBR)*



**South Padre Island**  
BIRDING, NATURE CENTER & ALLIGATOR SANCTUARY

*To be Amazed is Our Nature!*

- 3300+ Feet of Boardwalk
- 50 Acres of Wetlands
- 5 Bird Blinds
- Educational Talks & Much More!
- 5 Story Observation Tower
- 2 Gator Ponds

*Visit us today!*

Open 7 days a week 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM 6801 Padre Blvd. [spibirding.org](http://spibirding.org)

# Doctor Helps MS Patients In RGV

By Chris Ardis

Dr. Roberto Alejandro Cruz moved to the Rio Grande Valley in the summer of 2020 and a few months later developed a vision for a comprehensive multiple sclerosis center at DHR Health.

Five years later, the DHR Health Neuroscience Institute in McAllen received an official designation that makes it the only center of its kind south of San Antonio. Cruz is the center director of a medical facility that earned a designation from the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

It signifies a facility with a state-of-the-

art approach to diagnosing and treating patients with MS.

“It’s not the job of a single person,” Cruz said. “It’s a group of people -- an institution - doing what’s best for patients.”

## Team Effort

Cruz spoke about the comprehensive team of specialists that serve his patients living with MS.

The team includes neurologists, a neuroimmunologist, an ophthalmologist, pharmacists, psychologists, and physical and occupational therapists, among many

others.

“My team coordinates services with other team members,” Cruz said. “We all have access to the same medical records so we can all be on the same page. Great communication is key.”

One of his patients is attorney Joe D. Garcia, who in 2005 began experiencing numbness in his face and head and tingling in his extremities. At the time, doctors thought he had suffered a stroke.

Five years later, Garcia’s secretary told him he tended to walk diagonally rather than in a straight line. A Rio Grande Valley



*Dr. Roberto Alejandro Cruz, a neuroimmunologist, multiple sclerosis specialist and neurology medical director at DHR Health, is the director of the Comprehensive MS Center at DHR Health. (Photo courtesy of DHR Health.)*



*The DHR Health Neurology Institute is in McAllen at 2108 South M Street, Suite 4. This clinic is under the umbrella of the DHR Health Neuroscience Institute. (Photo courtesy of DHR Health.)*

neurologist diagnosed him with MS, referring him to a specialist in Houston for a second opinion. The diagnosis was confirmed. Garcia would travel to San Antonio for specialized MS care.

When hearing about Cruz, who is board certified in neurology and a fellowship-trained multiple sclerosis specialist, Garcia made an appointment.

“It has been a big blessing,” he said of not missing work to travel out of area for health care. “Having someone who is not just well educated but who cares and is at all of the MS events truly shows it’s his passion.”

Garcia also sees nurse practitioner Maggie Rodriguez. She is an MS patient herself and can understand the patients with firsthand knowledge, Garcia said.

Cruz said most of his patients are referred to him by their primary care physicians.

### The Gold Standard

Early symptoms include numbness or tingling in the face or limbs, fatigue, balance and vision problems, and unexplained muscle weakness. The history of symptoms plays a significant role in the diagnosis of MS, but they are only the beginning.

“MRIs are still the gold standard,” Cruz said. “Sometimes that is enough, but other times we need to do a lumbar puncture or laboratory testing to aid in the diagnosis.

“It’s important to understand that people with uncontrolled hypertension can have a lesion that looks like MS,” he said. “Diabetes and migraines can also result in minor changes in the brain.”

A trained MS specialist using a combination of diagnostic testing and patient history can make the correct diagnosis. Cruz and his team currently treat approximately 600 patients at the DHR Health Neurology Institute, which is under the umbrella of the Neuroscience Institute.

Although MS was long considered “a disease of Caucasians,” more than 90 percent of his patients are Hispanic. They travel from Laredo, Corpus Christi, San Antonio, Mexico and places in between for diagnosis and treatment. The mean age of MS diagnosis, Cruz said, is in the 30s.

Cruz said the goal is for patients to only need an appointment with him twice a year as part of long-term healthcare plan. Early diagnosis is essential.

“Research shows if you are able to identify, diagnose and start high-efficacy, disease-modifying treatment in the first two years, the chances of having a significant disability are extremely low,” Cruz said.

### ‘More Research Needs To Be Done’

Innovation doesn’t stop with the Comprehensive MS Center designation.

Dr. Cruz and his team are actively recruiting for clinical trials for new MS medications and other treatment options.

“Never, in the history of the Valley, have we had the opportunity for MS patients to participate in research,” Cruz said.

Residents in the DHR Health Internal Medicine Residency Program complete a rotation at the Neurology Institute for MS training. Dr. Cruz and his team gather and review data to publish their findings. They also attend national and international meetings to share what they are discovering.

“More research needs to be done on Hispanics,” he explained. “All of the work our team is doing here is with the hope of sharing all of it and closing the gaps in MS care.”



*The DHR Health Neuroscience Institute received the Comprehensive Multiple Sclerosis Center designation from the National Multiple Sclerosis Society in June, making it the only center in the Rio Grande Valley with this national designation. (Photo courtesy of DHR Health.)*

**RGV PARTNERSHIP**

*One Region, One Voice*

**WHY JOIN THE RGV PARTNERSHIP?**

- ROOTED IN THE RGV**  
SINCE 1944, WE’VE SUPPORTED THE VALLEY’S MOST IMPORTANT GROWTH EFFORTS.
- BEAUTIFICATION & IMPACT**  
WE LEAD REGIONAL PROJECTS THAT ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE ACROSS OUR COUNTIES.
- ADVOCACY**  
WE REPRESENT THE VALLEY’S INTERESTS AT THE STATE AND FEDERAL LEVEL.
- NETWORK OF LEADERS**  
CONNECT WITH BUSINESSES AND DECISION-MAKERS ACROSS ALL FOUR COUNTIES.

**LET’S GROW THE VALLEY—TOGETHER.**

[WWW.RGVPARTNERSHIP.COM](http://WWW.RGVPARTNERSHIP.COM)

@thergvpartnership



**16 YEARS**

**...HOW SWEET IT IS!**

*We Win When  
The RGV Wins  
...and The RGV  
Is Winning!*

**VBR**



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

*Positive Local News Since September 2009*



# WE KEEP OUR HEADS HELD HIGH AND OUR STANDARDS EVEN HIGHER



**TEXANS  
GET IT**



When you call Texas Mutual Insurance Company, a Texan answers. Maybe that's why over 80,000 businesses trust us as their workers' compensation provider. Because we're committed to the kind of care only a neighbor can provide. Visit [texasmutual.com/texansdeliver](https://www.texasmutual.com/texansdeliver) to learn more.

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