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By Todd Breland

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Here at VBR for over 16 years, our team has had the honor of connecting sellers and buyers, sharing leads and encouraging additional local commerce. For those of you who know anything about me, you know one of my greatest joys is putting people together. The positive print and news venues of Valley Business Report is one of the ways I play a

small part in fulfilling my purpose

My team and I are thankful to bring regional happy business news to your eyeballs since September 2009. Our publication, VBR e-Brief and website profile successful entrepreneurs, their businesses and other growing companies throughout the Rio Grande Valley. The pro-business stories across our platforms are intended to facilitate continued prosperity for regional businesses and residents.

As you and your marketing team are pursuing a multimedia plan for next year and beyond, we invite you to first research this current and past editions, of which a year's worth are available at www.valleybusinessreport.com. Then, drop an email to me at todd@valleybusinessreport.com to inquire about our multimedia advertising services. I will reply promptly to answer your questions and then offer advice to market your products and/or services in an effective and

efficient manner. For over 35 years, it has been my honor and privilege to assist companies and organizations increase sales and profits while respecting budgets.

If you don't currently subscribe to VBR e-Brief, please register on our site for this weekly, electronic newsletter and starting next Thursday morning, you'll receive a one-pager of positive articles and tips. VBR e-Brief provides new and fresh content that may have not made deadline for our monthly magazine.

Our VBR team has survived for these 16-plus years because you, RGV business leaders, have supported our efforts by reading our stories and partnering with our multimedia advertising services. For this longevity, we salute you. Your patronage means the world to us, and we are thrilled to continue connecting fellow leaders in 2026.

Happy Holidays to you and your families. We are one. We are the Rio Grande Valley.

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Entrepreneur Lights Up Holidays

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

Michael Zapata made his way through college engineering curriculum and earned a degree before realizing he yearned for something else.

Majoring in mechanical engineering, the UT-Rio Grande Valley graduate desired a work life beyond the confines of an office-oriented job. The Brownsville native tried working in restaurants and then did outside sales work in Houston before returning home with a clear goal in mind.

“I wanted to own my own business more than I wanted to be an engineer,” Zapata said. “I wanted to be my own boss.”

The path to surety can come from random encounters. For Zapata, it was a friend telling him about the opportunities in holiday Christmas lighting. The festive tradition of homeowners hanging up Christmas lights and taking more than a few risks high up on ladders to do so is engrained in American life. What if someone – specifically a company specializing in that work – offered to do that for you?

“I didn’t know it was a thing, but I found out it is,” Zapata said of commercial holiday lighting.

Beginning in 2019, with clients from his church being his first customers, Zapata launched his holiday-themed business.

‘Choose Your Hard’

In early November, the holiday season pace was already picking up for Zapata’s Homeglow Permanent & Christmas Lights.

He was back in Brownsville on a recent Friday afternoon after installing a Christmas display in Edinburg. As with most small businesses, it has been a steady climb to reach sufficient success to keep his enterprise going.

“Everyone wants to be an overnight success, but it doesn’t work that way,” Zapata said. “It takes a while to get noticed.”

The years of building up a small business go largely unseen with the exception of the entrepreneur and those in his or her family and business circles. For Zapata, it was largely the same in constructing a clientele via word-of-mouth recommendations and localized advertising on Facebook. There was a niche to be developed. In the United States, the holiday lights installation market is valued at over \$2 billion annually.



Michael Zapata chose his “hard” when starting up his holiday lighting business in 2019. (Courtesy)

There were a small handful of such businesses in the Rio Grande Valley when Zapata got started six years ago. Demand has grown steadily with technological innovations in smart, solar-powered and LED lighting as well as large-scale public installations as requested by cities and municipalities. For Zapata, his big breakthroughs in business came in 2024. The City of Brownsville contracted with Homeglow to install Christmas lighting along historic Palm Boulevard, at the Linear Park near Gladys Porter Zoo and at the airport.

“You choose your hard,” he said, referring to a philosophy that says big challenges are inevitable, so pick which ones are to be faced. “You know there will be struggles for at least a couple of years when you start out, but you keep working. It’s about people finding out about you.”

Building Year-Round Business

Zapata has become adept in installing permanent lighting as his customer base has grown.

It’s a durable, weather-resistant lighting



Michael Zapata has worked to get his business noticed, knowing there is no such thing as being “an overnight success.” (Courtesy)



Homeglow’s custom installation features professional-grade lights that are fit to each home with well-concealed extension cords. (Courtesy)

system that is installed permanently in place unlike temporary string lights that are put up and taken down seasonally. This type of lighting utilizes long-lasting LED lights that can be controlled via a mobile app or a remote and can change colors from non-holiday illumination to the bright colors of the holidays.

Installing permanent lighting has given Zapata's Homeglow a more year-round type of business. Holiday-related jobs still generate the majority of his company's revenues. The goal is to make enough over the holidays with lighting jobs from Palmview to South Padre Island to fund his off-season work. Focusing on quality work, acting promptly to fix problems and working closely with customers to give them the lighting presentation they seek are the foundations of his business.

"When I finish a job, I'm proud of it and my customers are thankful and happy with what we've done for them," Zapata said. "And who doesn't like Christmas? It's getting super busy but I still love it."



Homeglow Lights is busy during the holidays with installations large and small, including the reds and greens of Christmas wrapped around area palm trees. (Courtesy)



Homeglow Permanent & Christmas Lights provides holiday lighting for cities and commercial customers such as this display at South Padre Island, (Courtesy)



Homeglow Lights provides complete installation and removal of Christmas lighting throughout the Rio Grande Valley. (Courtesy)

Edinburg Invests In Historic Core Amid Growth

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

The Ebony Hills Golf Course and the adjoining Echo Hotel were signature pieces for decades on Edinburg’s landscape as the city established itself during its earliest years.

The golf course was opened in 1927 as a municipal property before being privately owned and today is again a public golf course. The Echo opened about three decades later as a showpiece two-story hotel. Community leaders developed the Echo as a city project with investors after repeated attempts failed to attract a corporate chain that would build a marquee facility in the city.

Taken together, they ran continuously along Freddy Gonzalez Drive to where the major thoroughfare intersects with Edinburg’s main street – Closner Boulevard. Both the golf course and the hotel faded in prominence over the years as a city that is now growing faster than any other Rio Grande Valley community

developed in all directions with the exception of its core.

The city is now going back to its roots in refurbishing the old course and constructing a new clubhouse and cart barn. Using bond funds, the Edinburg Economic Development Corporation will build its administrative offices and workforce resource center on open space between the new clubhouse and the old hotel. The Echo, meanwhile, has been purchased by Zoho. The multinational technology company will redevelop the main tower of the historic hotel into a state-of-the-art office campus.

“The City Commission thought it would be a good idea to put everything together,” said Raudel Garza, the EDC’s executive director, of the Echo’s redevelopment and golf course/EDC offices projects. “That’s what we’re doing.”

‘We’re That Busy’

The city’s collaboration with Zoho and its revamping of the golf course space is among the many projects Garza has undertaken in his three years as the EDC’s director.

Garza came to the Edinburg job in 2022 after a lengthy tenure in Harlingen, where he held a similar leadership post with the EDC in that city. In Edinburg, Garza has built a staff from scratch, stabilizing its operations after years of flux. He has further led efforts to build an EDC that can facilitate the city’s rate of growth. Edinburg’s population has grown roughly by about 10,000 residents since the 2020 Census and is estimated to be at about 110,724.

“We get so many calls coming in and asking about our market and wanting to understand what it’s about,” he said.

Garza lists these projects among the EDC’s top priorities:

The Echo Hotel was a vibrant centerpiece of Edinburg life for decades. It is set to be redeveloped by a multinational technology company. (Courtesy)



The establishment of the Ebony Hills Golf Course in 1927 was a key piece to Edinburg’s development. (Courtesy)

- Development of an industrial park in north Edinburg that has an ideal location close to U.S. Highway 281 for logistical and distribution operations.
- Revitalization of downtown Edinburg with the opening of a new county courthouse and the construction of a much-needed parking garage. Further support will come with the issuance of \$10,000 grants to small businesses to improve facades and exterior appearances.
- Attracting additional retailing and residential development along the Expressway 281 corridor in the Trenton Road area near Vackar Stadium. The latter is the home of the UTRGV football team. Edinburg is working to capitalize on the excitement of finally having college football in the Valley.
- Using bond money for upgrades to city parks and baseball and softball fields that are of sufficient quality to attract state and national tournaments in increasing sports-linked tourism.

“We’re working with developers and investors and helping them get through the process,” Garza said. “We’re hiring more people ... we’re that busy.”

Mixing Old & New

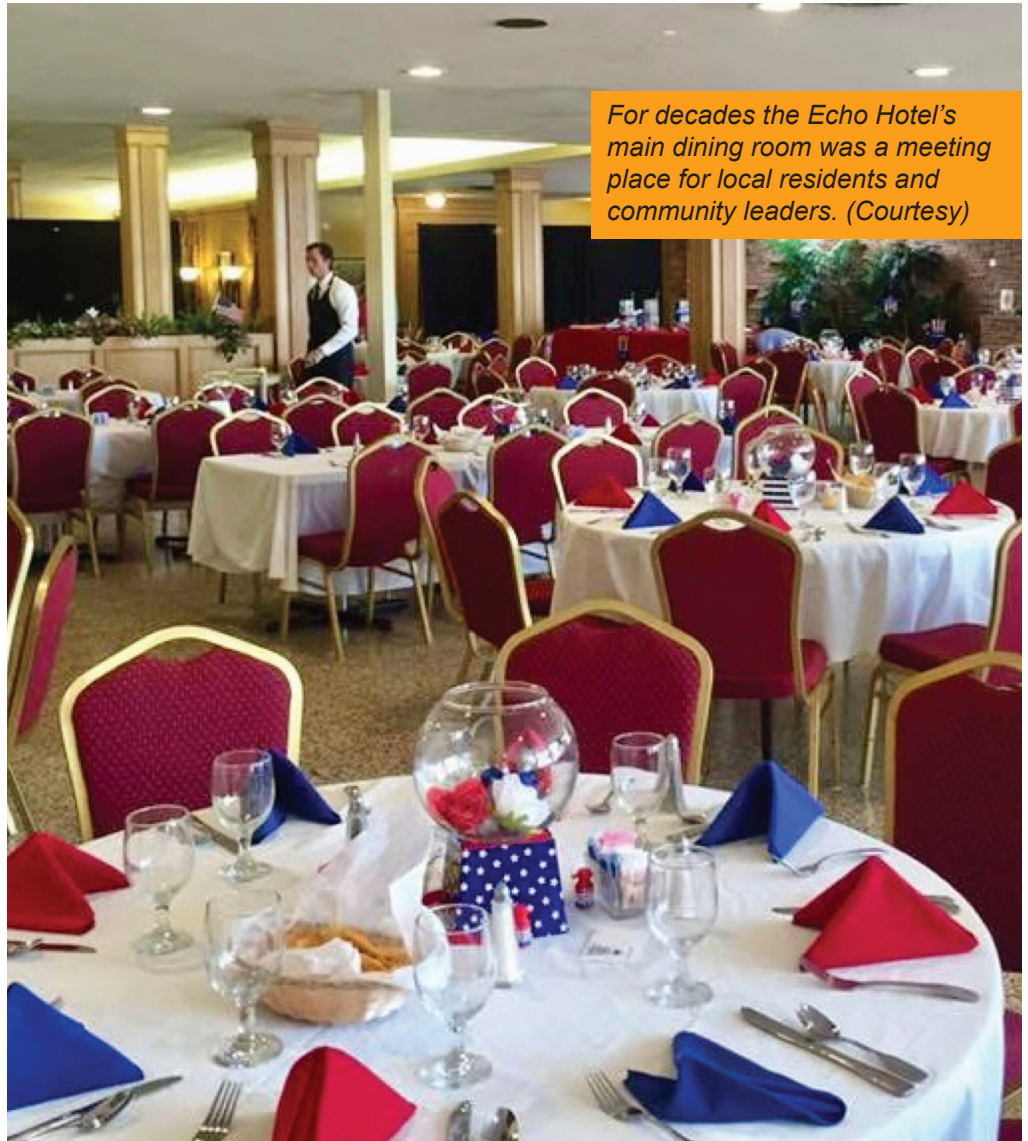
Mixing in the new with the vintage of the Echo and Ebony Hills brings a classic touch to Edinburg’s growth.

There were years of back-and-forth discussions about what to do with the historic nine-hole golf course. There was some community sentiment to make the Ebony Hills property available for commercial development, but ultimately, that talk didn’t progress to anything definitive. The decision to build a new clubhouse at Ebony Hills along with some recent infrastructure course improvement has settled the matter.

At the next-door Echo, the grand hotel struggled for years despite good-faith efforts to keep it alive by its latest owners. Concerns over its fate – and possible demolition – were alleviated with news of the Zoho purchase. There was some negative pushback as to what the tech company would do with the hotel site,

but Garza says Zoho is mindful of what the hotel building means to Edinburg.

“Zoho does understand that there’s a lot of history with the Echo,” he said. “They are preserving the main tower and any new buildings they add will resemble the tower architecture.”



For decades the Echo Hotel's main dining room was a meeting place for local residents and community leaders. (Courtesy)





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New Program Taps Into Space Opportunities

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

SpaceX with its Starbase on Boca Chica Beach is transforming the Brownsville economy and is bringing in a slew of outside investors and companies into the area.

The buzz of Brownsville becoming a space city has made some local residents wonder when the opportunities others are seeking will come their way.

“We’ve heard it plenty of times from the public,” said Nathan Burkhart, the vice president of entrepreneurship and innovations for the Brownsville Community Improvement Corporation. “There’s all of these outsiders taking advantage of the space industry emerging here.”

To address those concerns and tap into local talent and companies the BCIC has launched a Space Accelerator program. It’s an eight-week course that helps local businesses grow in the space economy by providing mentorship, expert instruction and access to funding opportunities. The BCIC is partnering with Cameron County

and the Space Foundation of Colorado in establishing the program.

The Space Accelerator recently graduated its first participants who hope to scale up their companies and connect to funding and industry contacts that could bring new opportunities and growth.

“I think people need to be prepared that it’s not going to be business as usual,” said Douglas Best, who owns the Brownsville-based Partnership Institute and was a member of the first class. “We’re trying to flip the switch on how people think here.”

‘Eye Opening’

Julie Pedraza runs a forward-thinking data and analytics company that can help local governments see satellite imagery of flooding patterns in their communities.

Pedraza calls it “smart urban planning” and her Ava Analytics & Consulting can help make that happen. She was among the inaugural class

of the Space Accelerator and it gave her a good look into “the ecosystem of the space industry.”

“It has been eye opening,” Pedraza said. “It’s a whole new market. There’s space-to-space and space-to-Earth goods and services. As an entrepreneur, you can learn how to tap into those sectors and begin to see what’s possible.”

Learning the scope and depth of the space industry can appear daunting for a local business owner, but where there are talented and ambitious entrepreneurs, there is the potential to succeed.

“Bringing space opportunities to regions isn’t just about rockets,” said Kelli Kedis Ogborn, the vice president of the Space Foundation’s entrepreneurship and commerce office. “It’s about unlocking economic potential. When companies see how their capabilities connect to the space industry, they realize they’re not on the outside looking in. They’re already part of the future.”

Best is one of those Brownsville-based



Nathan Burkhart of the Brownsville Community Improvement Corporation says a new Space Accelerator program provides local entrepreneurs with insights into the space industry. (Courtesy)

entrepreneurs who's thinking big and being creative. He is a nurse by training and experience, and his company is setting out to design space suits for the physically disabled. Space travel is an equalizer of strength, Best says, in noting astronauts lose muscle mass due to the lack of gravity. The physically handicapped on Earth may be less so in space due to this factor, he said.

"You build a suit based off that ideology," he said. "You take what they have and optimize it."

'Space Adjacent Economy'

From here, Burkhart says BCIC wants the new program to focus on "the space adjacent economy."

He describes it as being in the fields of logistics, satellites, analytics, supply chains and space suits. It reinforces Ogborn's point that a space economy isn't just about rockets and the companies that build them. The BCIC hopes to do for local space entrepreneurs what it has done in mentoring and helping to develop small businesses in other sectors. They have included aspiring local entrepreneurs in the food, medical and robotics industries. The BCIC has used training programs, seminars and pitch competitions to nurture and grow small business owners in Brownsville.

"We're trying to use the same model with space," Burkhart said. "We have long believed that we have great business capital and talent locally. We're excited to see where it takes us with space."

There is much to learn and adapt to in embracing the new space age in Brownsville. Best says of the space suit company, "we won't know more until we try."

It is time, he says, "to get busy and learn the opportunities that are available."

"The eyes globally are looking at what is happening here," Best said.



Tapping into Brownsville's space economy is more than just the companies that build rockets. (Courtesy)

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Camp's Ropes Course Conquers Fears

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

Alexis Wooderson takes a look up a 40-foot tower that Brownsville's Camp RIO calls its Treehouse and begins to unpack what it can do.

"It can seem like a puzzle," said Wooderson, who manages the camp's new ropes course that runs through the tower. "It looks like a daunting course, but once you're up there, you can feel how secure it is."

With the help of a nearly \$600,000 grant, the nature-based Camp RIO campus constructed a High Ropes Adventure Course on its 85-acre grounds in north Brownsville. It is the only facility of its kind in the Rio Grande Valley and is the sort of outdoor activity found at outdoor camps nationwide. A high ropes course is an aerial adventure facility with a series of suspended obstacles like bridges and zip lines that hang suspended 25 to 50 feet off the ground.

"It's always something we wanted to have at the camp," said Mary Barba, the curriculum and date coordinator for Camp RIO. "It's been on our wish list since we opened."

A \$593,000 quality-of-line grant from the Brownsville Community Improvement Corporation made it possible. In September, Camp RIO celebrated the high ropes course's grand opening with Brownsville Mayor John Cowen on hand to provide remarks. The range of up-in-the-air activities of the ropes course offers Valley youths and adults unique higher altitude challenges.

"It gives a chance for people to conquer their fears and an opportunity to work together in building stronger teams," Barba said of what are often group activities high up on the ropes course. "They challenge themselves individually to do something they haven't done before."

Defying Heights

The Camp RIO site on Fish Hatchery Road is located a few miles north of Alton Gloor Boulevard.

It existed for decades as Camp Lula Sams in serving as the major Girl Scouts camp in the Valley. Private land owners in 2015 sold the property to the Idea Public Schools. Camp RIO began out of that

purchase with a goal to provide a quality camp experience for Valley residents. Over the last 10 years, the camp has been operating outdoor education and day camp programs and also offers corporate and retreat programming.

The new ropes course is a major addition to Camp RIO's offerings. It sits just west of the main campus site. The tower rises

over a caliche road on the drive from the camp's main entrance. Wooderson says "there's a little bit of something for everything" on the ropes course.

Tires, swaying pedestrian bridges, ropes and netting are among the elements to explore many feet up in the air. On the ground, participants go through a tutorial on how to use carabineers to safely attach



Alexis Wooderson and Mary Barba are among the Camp RIO staffers who have been trained to have an expertise in a new ropes course in Brownsville. (VBR)

themselves to wiring to make their way around and through the ropes course. A fear of heights is one challenge to face and dealing with it effectively on the ropes course can build confidence. The thrill of trying something new – and daring – and succeeding can be exhilarating.

“Sometimes people get here and don’t think they can do it because it’s really high,” Wooderson said. “By encouraging them and allowing them to take the lead, you can see them grow and gain confidence in their abilities.”

Wooderson can relate. She recalls “starting out nervous about heights,” and now she and her staff prep and teach participants how to take on the challenges of the ropes course.

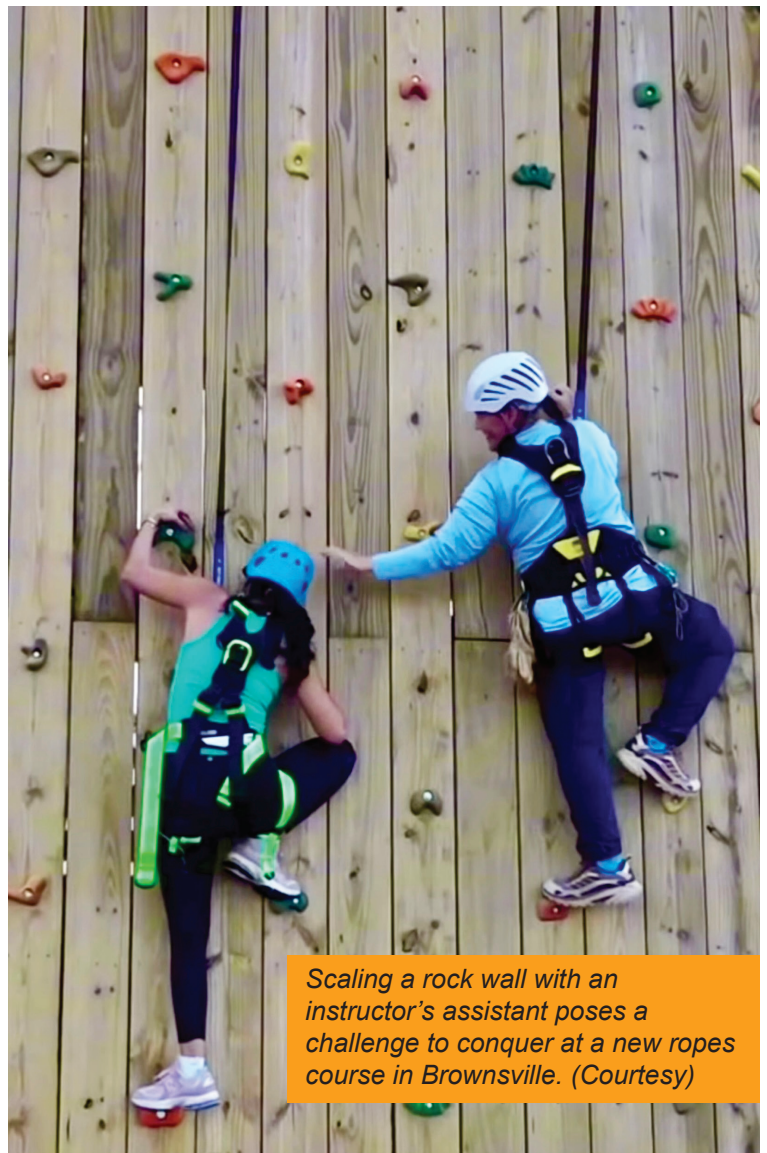
“It’s pushing yourself past what you think you can do,” Wooderson said of mastering the ropes course. “You learn more about yourself.”



A participant waves while suspended in air at a new ropes course in Brownsville. (Courtesy)



Taking the first steps to overcome fear of heights is among the challenges at Camp RIO’s new ropes course in Brownsville. (Courtesy)



Scaling a rock wall with an instructor’s assistant poses a challenge to conquer at a new ropes course in Brownsville. (Courtesy)

'Biggest Grins'

Camp RIO is accredited by the American Camp Association and sits on 85 acres of native Valley habitat.

Ten of those acres are available for camp activities. The remaining 75 acres are protected in perpetuity under a conservation easement administered by the Valley Land Fund. Students from Idea schools often use the camp but is also open to visits from other area school districts. Camp RIO allows public access throughout the year via quarterly community events that often have a tie to holiday events.

In all, Barba says about 26,000 students visit Camp RIO every school year to go with the over 400 summer day campers. With the ropes course, they have a new feature and challenge to take on during their camp visits. There's also a towering rock wall to scale and an 80-foot-long zip line to provide further adventures and thrills. Once all elements of the big Treehouse are completed, Wooderson likes to ask how it went for the participants.

"I ask them, 'how did it feel?' Then I see the biggest grins on their faces," she said.



It's a high wire but safe act to take on the high ropes course at Camp RIO. (VBR)

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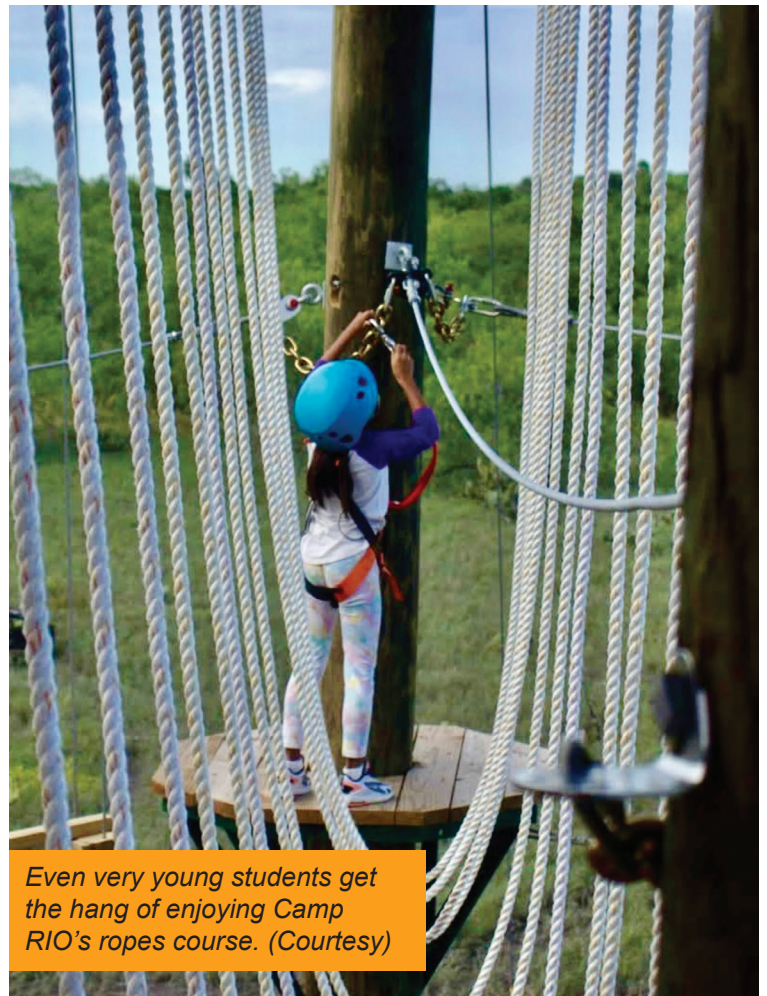


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Even very young students get the hang of enjoying Camp RIO's ropes course. (Courtesy)

Mercedes Refreshes Boots & City's Heritage

By Ricardo D. Cavazos, *Content Editor*

The city of boots has refreshed its look with paint and repairs that are making it shine anew.

The City of Mercedes over the last 13 years has highlighted the city's western heritage with 30 boots – each standing six feet tall – that are placed on street corners and major intersections. The boots bear the names of colleges and universities in Texas and the United States. The city's big boots spark pride among alumni and admirers of universities such as UTRGV, Texas A&M and the University of Texas.

The boots are out in the natural elements of weather with Valley heat, humidity, high winds and the occasional downpours taking their toll. Ten of the 30 boots were recently in most need of repair. Two of the 10 boots to be restored were perhaps the most prominent. The UT and A&M boots sit caddy-corner to each other on 2nd Street/Business 83 and those spots had been vacant in recent weeks.

Those two boots and eight others were in the shop of Viera's Paint & Body Shop for about two months this fall as paint and repair work was done. The Mercedes-area business was selected by the city's Economic Development Corporation board to make the necessary repairs and apply fresh coats of paint on the boots. The results were dazzling. By Nov. 1, Alejandro Viera was installing the 10 boots back to their familiar locations.

"It's the city of boots, right?" Viera asked as traffic buzzed by on Texas Avenue as he put the boot of Texas Women's University in place. "This is something I did for the community and people who live here."

Connecting To History

It made sense in 2013 when the local EDC decided to play up Mercedes' agricultural and western heritage in placing the outsized boots around town.

The city is the longtime home of the Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show and the history of boot-making in Mercedes goes back to 1929. It was in that era when Mexican bootmaker Zeferino Rios set up his first shop in the city. From there, Mercedes built a reputation for the finest work in handmade boots. The tradition of boot making became a calling card for the Mid-Valley city. Today, Rios of Mercedes makes and assembles boots that are made locally and sold around the country and the world.



Alejandro Viera looks over the iconic boots he repainted and repaired on a busy street corner in Mercedes. (VBR)

“The boot is very symbolic of the heritage of the whole area and it has become the iconic symbol of Mercedes,” City Commissioner Ruben Saldana said. “It’s very fitting to have the boots represent the city.”

Viera is among the local residents who has seen the big boots in Mercedes for years without perhaps giving them much thought given their ubiquitous presence. Working on the boots at his shop has given him a stronger sense as to what they mean to Mercedes. Viera is accustomed to working on cars and trucks and says the boots project “was very different and interesting.”

He took out his cell phone in taking a break from installing the TWU boot and smiled in showing videos and photos from his shop with the 10 boots lined up and ready to take their rightful places in Mercedes. If anyone was wondering where the boots were, Viera said they would see them back and better than ever.

School Colors

The refreshed boots feature vivid colors, from the burnt orange of UT to the maroon

and white of A&M, and the Mean Green of the University of North Texas.

The boots representing Texas A&M-Kingsville and UT-San Antonio were also refreshed. Marcos Garcia, the president of the Mercedes EDC board, said refreshing the look of the boots serves a dual purpose.

“It not only allows for our community to continue that tradition, but it allows us as a city, to promote postsecondary education and remain true to the city’s rich history of being the boot capital of Texas,” he said.

Garcia says “las botas de Mercedes” have been an attraction for both residents and visitors and taking photos with them is a great way “to showcase their school pride.”

Resorting the 10 boots to join the 20 others around town reiterates the imagery and importance of the Western heritage to a city that revels in its livestock show and rodeos.

“It just puts a smile on your face,” Commissioner Saldana said of the connection of Mercedes to its boot-making history. “Boots and our heritage to agriculture are well-engraved into our community.”



Before recent repairs, the Texas A&M boot in downtown Mercedes was showing signs of wear-and-tear. (Courtesy)

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Some of the boots of Mercedes were lined up and repaired recently at Viera's Paint & Body shop. (VBR)

Town Band Brings Joy To McAllen

By Chris Ardis

The Thanksgiving turkey and tamales are already a savory memory.

Holiday lights sparkle throughout our communities. But nothing says “most wonderful time of the year” quite like music. In McAllen, a revered town band has spread the spirit of Christmas for over 50 years.

The McAllen Wind Ensemble is actually the third name of the group, which was established in 1973. Businessman Bill Wilson brought the idea home to McAllen after being inspired by plaza bands in Mexico. It was called the McAllen Town Band and was an all-volunteer group of musicians. They made their debut at a concert in Archer Park in March of 1974.

The name later changed to McAllen Symphonic Band and then to its current name, the McAllen Wind Ensemble. The group continues to cherish its origins.

“We are still proud to be the McAllen Town Band,” said Jonathan Stevens, an at-large board member of the Town Band Association and a clarinetist in the Ensemble.

The City of McAllen’s McAllen Performing and Cultural Arts Foundation sponsors all tickets to the group’s concerts, opening the doors to everyone.

“The City of McAllen proudly supports the McAllen Wind Ensemble because the performing arts are essential to our community’s cultural vitality,” McAllen Mayor Javier Villalobos said.

“By making these concerts free and accessible, we ensure that every resident has the opportunity to experience the joy of live music.”

The mayor praised the ensemble for its artistic excellence and strengthening the city’s shared identity. Villalobos says the group enriches the quality of life for all who call McAllen home.

‘A Musical Journey’

The Cultural Arts Foundation’s ticket sponsorship provides free admission for all for the ensemble’s performances.

The community is encouraged to reserve tickets at mcallenwindensemble.org. Those who prefer printed tickets may go to the MPAC Box Office. Tickets are

general admission. Like a concert band, the McAllen Wind Ensemble features woodwinds, brass and percussion, and often adds guest musicians like harpists and pianists to perform.

Special guest performers at the November concert included McAllen school district’s elementary choir students. Stevens emphasized the work it requires to have the students participate at the upcoming concert.

“The key is committed choir directors like Rose Arevalo,” Stevens said of the choir teacher at Seguin Elementary School in McAllen. “She gets the parents involved, rehearses with the students. She does it all.”

Stevens says partnerships like this one enhance the mission of the McAllen Wind Ensemble.

“We are always looking at ways to bridge music at every level,” he said.

Thanks to the McAllen Performing and Cultural Arts Foundation, tickets to all McAllen Wind Ensemble concerts are free. Veterans made up a large part of the Nov. 11 concert crowd. (Photo McAllen Wind Ensemble)



Community Involvement

“Christmas Across America” is scheduled for Dec. 19 at 7:30 p.m. at the McAllen Performing Arts Center. Those in attendance will be treated to what the ensemble calls “a musical holiday journey across the USA.”

“Christmas Across America” will combine Christmas carols and music from “The Nutcracker.”

The magical feel of “The Nutcracker” will feature guest performers from Deborah Case Dance Academy, bringing the music to life in a choreographed art form.

Rogero “Roger” Olivarez Jr. has been the ensemble’s musical director since 2014, making him the longest-serving director in its history. Olivarez is the ensemble’s conductor and an inductee in the Rio Grande Valley Band Directors Hall of Fame Class of 2024-2025. The musicians in the ensemble include teachers, band directors and community members from diverse backgrounds.

“We start each year with 60-65 musicians for our first concert and grow to 75-80,” Stevens said.

Martha Clow is president of the Town Band board and an oboist who has performed with the group for over 40 years.

“We love making music, and we love being together to do it,” Clow said. “We have an amazing group and an amazing director who pulls us all together.”

Stevens says McAllen has a town band because of the all-volunteer group of talented musicians and the support it receives from the city and its business community. The McAllen Parks & Recreation Department supports the ensemble’s efforts by moving the group’s equipment and aiding in many other ways. South Texas Health System has been the ensemble’s season sponsor for the past two years, underwriting the cost to produce the shows.

The ensemble’s nonprofit organization, the McAllen Town Band Association, offers six levels of sponsorship as well as advertising opportunities. Individuals can join the ensemble’s Patron Program. For \$50 per year, patrons enjoy reserved seating and expedited entry into the concert. A special lounge area for patrons is one of the newest perks.

It’s all part of playing music that inspires countless memories.

“It’s all part of being an arts community,” Stevens said.

Musical Director and Conductor Roger Olivarez leads the McAllen Wind Ensemble at its February 2025 concert. (Photo McAllen Wind Ensemble)



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