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Volume III, Issue 5

January 2012

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See page 5



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We hit the ground running. A new year and so much to do, the appointment calendar is full, and we're constantly adding to and fine tuning our to-do list. The wheels are turning. It's all systems go for 2012!

The holidays are over, and we're completely refocused. Where will we take our companies this year? How will we hurdle unforeseen obstacles that cross our paths over the next 12 months? Who will we partner with to jumpstart a recession-overcoming year?

2008 was a very rough year. 2009 was a rough year. 2010 saw some light. 2011 picked up momentum. Indicators point to a winning 2012! Locally, we've weathered the storm. We're stronger because of it. We buckled our straps, trimmed the fat, and got leaner and smarter about expenditures, personnel and capital improvements. But we made it and 2012 is our year!

Look around you. Ground is breaking. New businesses are moving to the Valley. Existing companies are adding locations across the Expressway,

and there's a fresh feeling in the air. And I'm not just talking about having a second serious autumn (almost winter) here in the 785 zip codes.

For the New Year, which industries will lead the pack? Will it be manufacturing, retail, service, technology, healthcare, real estate? What companies will separate themselves from the competition? Will it be companies of five employees or less? Will it be organizations of 100 or more who grow by 25%? Who will take their company to the next level and surpass all expectations?

The question we have to ask ourselves is, "Can I and will I quarterback this team to the championship?"

From college bowls to NFL playoffs, some teams are expected to win and others are sleepers. Those Cinderella teams come out of the bushes and, against all odds, bring home the trophy. Are you ready?

Sure, our determination and energy of positive momentum will be challenged by inside and outside forces - from the naysayer in the next office to gov-

ernmental resistance in D.C. But, press on. Methodically, systematically and optimistically look only ahead. The past belongs there. We have work to do.

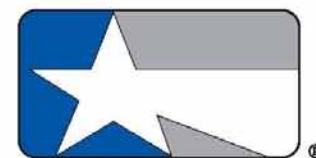
Everybody must rise to the occasion and contribute. All links have to participate for the chain to carry its weight. This year should be a "We made it through the recession victory party!" Winning is the only option. As we all know, it's a lot more fun to celebrate than sulk. We, the Rio Grande Valley, are a festive people. Let's put our money where our mouth is and claim our prize: the ring.

Todd Breland
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Please include your full name and city of residence.

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THE JOYS OF GETTING IN SHAPE IN THE NEW YEAR

By Eileen Mattei

Who doesn't want more energy, agility, muscle tone and strength paired with reduced anxiety, feeling healthier, better balance, a flatter stomach and a tighter tushie? Yes, it requires exercise but nowadays getting in shape and staying in shape can be fun. No, really. Fitness centers, gyms, zumba studios, personal trainers and yoga and tai chi teachers across the Valley are staying in business by making working out fun and, in many cases, much more affordable.

Fitness has been called the strongest predictor of longevity. Exercising more helps you live longer, many doctors tell their patients. It improves cardiovascular health and mental health. It staves off problems associated with diabetes, osteoporosis and a long list of ailments that would rival the spiel of an old-fashioned radio quack selling snake oil and goat glands. Besides, a flabby body does not have to be a natural aspect of aging. And baby boomers, of course, are convinced that they will not age like previous generations.

BEING A ROLE MODEL

"I decided I wanted to be healthier for my kids and set a good example," Dr. Octavio Elizondo said. "I couldn't expect them to be active and healthy if I wasn't myself." The San Benito dentist now spends at least two hours daily on a spinning machine at Max Fitness. That exercise was a major factor in his losing over 150 pounds. "When my daughters are visiting me, they are regulars here every day."

Max Fitness is a Valley-grown, family-oriented chain, established in 1998, that has six fitness centers spread between Edinburg, Harlingen, McAllen and Mission. As with most gyms, the New Year brings them a surge of new members eager to shape up. "I expect all the Resolutionaries to come back in January," said general manager Anthony De La Garza, a retired body builder and former Mr. Texas light heavy weight champion.



Bod Squad personal trainer Renea Perez guides a client through an intense workout. (VBR)

The fitness centers' draws are unlimited use of the facility with its 150 pieces of cardio equipment—treadmills, steppers and spinning machines—and

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strength training equipment (weights) combined with an affordable, sanitary, family atmosphere, a floor to ceiling window wall that lets in daylight and the non-intimidating staff. Amenities include classes, a separate women's area for those who prefer privacy, babysitting and personal trainers. The clientele is remarkable when it comes to etiquette, De La Garza reported.

Among those working out are people who were sent to exercise by their doctors with the goal of finishing their rehabilitation and recovery from strokes, heart attacks and other problems. Exercise is noted for also improving overall wellbeing, their doctors have told them.

"Most individuals love to stay toned. They just want to be healthy," De La Garza said, and they are pleased to be looking good in jeans. A fit-looking woman named Sarah doing triceps extensions reps said she workouts five times a week. "I like what it does for me. It's very healthy."

Max Fitness isn't the only Valley fitness concept that has been successful. The first Curves, a women-only, 30-minute workout circuit, was opened in 1992 in Harlingen by Gary and Diane Heavin. Within 10 years, the strength training and cardio program—celebrated for its "no makeup, no men, no mirrors" phi-



losophy—had 7,000 locations, including studios in Harlingen, Weslaco, Edinburg, and Mission. Now an international fitness leader, Curves has all its exercise equipment fabricated in the Valley.

National names like Gold's Gym vie with mom-

Exercising allows multi-tasking like cycling and reading. (VBR)

and-pop businesses such as Pharr Gym and Olympus Gym for the attention of health conscious Valley residents of all ages. Nationally about 15 percent of Americans work out at a gym.

Dancing your heart out

At Zumba Fitness in Mission, the comment that owner Martha Saldivar hears most frequently is, "It's fun!" For six years, she has been leading classes where people energetically dance to regaton, salsa and merengue tunes. "They like that they are dancing, having fun and burning 300 to 600 calories an hour with Zumba," she said.

Saldivar teaches five classes a day, four days a week, because Zumba is such a popular way to get in shape. Her dancers range from school kids to seniors in their 70s. They often convince their friends to share the good times working out.

In contrast, the benefits of one-on-one personal training are readily visible among the buff clients of Renea Perez. Her Bod Squad gives a woman an intense, one-hour workout that mixes cardio, strength and endurance. "Okay, relax for 30 seconds," she has told a panting client.

"I train people who are very busy. To me, it's better if you take the time to do your training right," Perez said. "I change up things in their routine, because I get bored easily, too." She is a certified prenatal trainer, which it turns out, helps women both during delivery and getting back into shape afterwards.

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The paths to healthy exercise include yoga and tai chi, which strengthen muscles as well as increasing balance and flexibility. Those workouts are gentler on aging joints, but still can be strenuous.

Nationally, some gyms are losing clients because the networking element has disappeared. There are reports of less camaraderie than before, as more people are plugged into iPods and fixated on screens. Then again, some of those working out focus on getting in, getting it done, and getting out to the next item in their busy days.

Nevertheless, the Valley's variety of exercise venues allows most everyone to find their level of comfort. One rainy afternoon, treadmill walkers worked out in quiet companionship, all in a row, instead of scattering to distant machines.

What keeps a person motivated to continue working out? Having fun with interesting classes and reaching to accomplish more than you have before are important elements. But feeling healthy and looking healthy are the most powerful incentives. Exercise. Live long and prosper in 2012.



It's no walk in the park, but a treadmill lets you exercise rain or shine. (VBR)

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SARATI TAPS PRIVATE LABEL MARKET

By Eileen Mattei

A resaca's edge in the Bayview area seems an unlikely site for a manufacturing plant, but Sarati International laboratories calls the isolated location home. Since 1995, the private label, personal care products plant has been formulating, compounding and packaging body lotions and facial gels, toothpastes and hair products. Currently Sarati produces over 200 formulas for clients such as spas, doctors' offices, resorts, salons and retail chains.

Barbara Creighton had a contract manufacturing company producing personal care products in Arizona but seeking more consistent quality, she moved to the Rio Grande Valley in 1995. Here she launched Sarati Laboratories with a staff consisting of a chemist and handful of employees. Initially, the startup hired senior citizens as needed to package the tubes and jars of gels, lotions and OTC (over the counter) topical pain relievers.

Standing next to pallets of Sarati products ready for shipment to England, Creighton talked about the



reasons for Sarati's continuing growth. "We've always catered to a niche market, the smaller business. Our private label and custom formulas have a very low minimum." By catering to clients who buy in small lots, when the industry minimum is typically 25,000 units, Sarati has tapped an eager market. Sarati's house brand "Next to Nature" has over 100 different

Barbara Creighton, in Sarati's compounding lab, has seen her private label company grow into an international presence. (VBR)

stock items, including hydrating facial cleaner, hair conditioner, coconut milk cleanser, makeup remover, firming face & neck lotion, body frosting and eye serum. A client's unique label can be affixed to as few as 250 bottles or tubes or jars. Custom labels for orders under 500 are printed in-house.

One of the company's steadiest clients has been a doctor who has marketed his topical joint pain relief cream on QVC for over seven years, racking up \$1 million in annual retail sales. "Every 18 months we tweak the formula, adding a new vitamin or such." For another long-time customer, a major Texas retailer, Sarati fabricated a body wash.

Most of Sarati's clients come to them through an internet search, with orders arriving from Hungary and Norway as well as across the U.S. and now, Mexico. "The situation in Mexico is creating more work for us," Creighton said.

Clients order samples of the Next to Nature products that align with their interests and then place their order for full-size Next to Nature products with their private label wrapped around it. On the other hand, if the client opts to have an existing product adapted to their specifications, Sarati signs a non-disclosure agreement and the client pays R&D costs to create a formula to meet their vision. Sarati's longtime chemist Rebecca Campos adapts formulas so the new item has, for example, a different scent or consistency or added ingredients.

Creighton attributes Sarati's growth during the recession to the spirit of American entrepreneurship. "The key is hope. When times are bad, the entrepreneurial mind kicks in. They start thinking of different

An advertisement for Rental World.com. The main image shows a large white tent with a blue and white striped canopy and an American flag. A red chili pepper mascot is holding a banner that says "TEXAS FESTIVALS & EVENTS ASSOCIATION VENDOR OF THE YEAR". The Rental World.com logo is prominently displayed. A list of services is provided: Feather Banners, Tents, Dancing Tubes, Searchlights, and Rooftop Balloons. There are two inset photos: one showing a fenced-in area with equipment and another showing an outdoor event space with tables and chairs. At the bottom, contact information is listed for five locations: McAllen (630-3564), Weslaco (973-5099), Harlingen (364-2389), Brownsville (546-9042), and Brownsville (542-1837).

630-3564 973-5099 364-2389 546-9042 542-1837
MCALLEN WESLACO HARLINGEN BROWNSVILLE BROWNSVILLE

ways to make a living.” Creighton mentioned a retired professional athlete who concocted a topical pain cream and found investors to back him.

At Sarati, his formula is being tweaked, and the container is being changed for customer convenience. “He sees it in sports medicine offices and gyms. He’s got a real good attitude, and he didn’t have preconceived ideas,” she said. “I had to educate him on the rules and the costs of doing (FDA) testing on OTC products,” which can run from \$9,000 to \$19,000. The drug facts panel has to be exact and follow FDA standards.

Sarati International is licensed by FDA and inspected by the Texas Department of Health. Sarati’s in-house lab tests all production for bacteria and pH. Samples are sent to an outside lab to confirm that the percentage of active ingredients matches the label.

THE PRODUCTION FLOOR

In most cosmetics, water is the largest ingredient, Creighton said, and because it is critical that the water have no contaminants, it is tested daily. Sarati relies on a complex Culligan system that filters and processes water until it is the equivalent of the pure water used in hospital dialysis systems.

Following a strict protocol in the compounding room, ingredients are weighed out into stainless steel

vats, sized between 30 and 300 gallons, and mixed, melted, emulsified and then homogenized. “It’s like making a cake. They have to do it the same way every time,” Creighton said. The manufacturing line is set up for flexible flow, depending what is being formulated. Quality control checks the product before and after it goes to a high speed packaging machine which fills and seals a tube in one second.

Sarati runs its own R&D lab where chemist Campos replicates formulas and creates new ones. “It’s by trial and error, and the process can take a week or, in once case, four years,” Creighton said. The time depends on luck and additional changes the client requests to make a product exclusively theirs. “R&D and getting formulas done quickly is where we were getting bogged down.” In December, an experienced cosmetic chemist joined the company to boost the technical manpower.

The company also maintains a sequestered area for production of organic items such as toothpastes and pain alleviators.

Two years ago, with sales increasing, Creighton realized she needed to expand Sarati’s production area and considered relocating to Harlingen, where many of her employees live. But the spacious resaca property had too much going for it. “It’s so peaceful.



Approximately 100 Nature's Own products from eye creams to cleansers are available to have a private label affixed. (VBR)

It is too tranquil and relaxing to leave,” she said. One year ago, Sarati built a 6,000 square foot building solely to house packaging material.

“We’re looking forward to increasing sales. We are working with so many people who want to have a private label, personal care line,” Creighton said.

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KNAPP ACQUISITION LABELED A WIN-WIN SITUATION

By Eileen Mattei

South Texas Health System's acquisition of Knapp Medical Center in Weslaco is scheduled to be finalized at the end of January 2012.

The partnership process began in May 2011 when a consultant hired by Knapp Medical Center recommended that the 226-bed community hospital find a strategic partner in the local marketplace. After reviewing various proposals, Knapp Medical Center chose to enter into negotiations with South Texas Health System (STHS). A fixture in the Rio Grande Valley for 30 years, STHS is the operator of four acute care facilities: Edinburg Regional Medical Center, Edinburg Children's Hospital, McAllen Medical Center and McAllen Heart Hospital along with the South Texas Behavioral Health Center and Cornerstone Regional Hospital. The agreement, announced on November 30, provides a two-month window until the closing on January 31 which gives the parties time to complete surveys and

iron out details.

"This is a win-win-win for everybody: the Weslaco community, Knapp Medical Center and South Texas Health System," said Doug Matney, group vice president of South Texas Health System. STHS is a part of UHS which is a Fortune 500 hospital management company with over 100 facilities. The partnership with STHS will give Knapp patients access to physician coverage and health services not currently available in Weslaco.

Weslaco and Hidalgo County are projected to be gaining between two and two-and-one half million dollars in tax revenue, Matney said, as Knapp shifts from its non-profit status. Proceeds of the sale to STHS will go to a new foundation that will fund health care initiatives in the Weslaco community.

"Knapp employees are guaranteed their jobs at the same rate of pay and benefits they have now," Matney said. "The City of Weslaco is going to have many benefits from this. But

most important, the individual patient will reap the greatest benefits by getting the healthcare services they need in Weslaco. They won't have to go to other cities."

STHS's existing acute care facilities are Certified Stroke Centers and Chest Pain Centers. McAllen Medical Center is the Lead Trauma Center for Hidalgo County and in the process of upgrading to Level II. STHS' goal, Matney stated, is to try to make sure that the residents of Valley get the level of care they deserve. "We want to become and remain the premier provider of services in the community."

Matney said the current intent is to bring a Chest Pain Center to Knapp. "We will have to work with the physicians on that. If we have the support of the medical community, that will happen."

The purchase price will not be disclosed until the sale is finalized.

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CHANGING THE IMAGE OF A WELL-KNOWN NAME

By Eileen Mattei

The Lackner name goes on in Brownsville, as the ad for the new Lackner Galerie proclaims. After 104 years as a Brownsville institution, R.L. Lackner closed its doors last spring. The fine jewelry inventory was sold off, and the building on Boca Chica emptied.

"It was the economy," explained Carolyn Lackner Baird, a member of the third generation who had begun working in the family businesses as a teenager wrapping purchases. In the 1970s she was an adult working at Lackner, and about 30 years ago, she started running the jewelry store. A fourth generation, Baird's daughter, who is a gemologist, was working at R.L. Lackner before they shut the door.

"When I closed, I wasn't going to reopen," Baird said. She took advantage of her free time to travel around the U.S, but that stopped being fun. "Time dragged when I was not working. I got bored very fast and decided to try something new and different."

Baird decided to revamp the Lackner image into something fresher, more modern. Actually, she had long had an idea of what she wanted her next store to be like. She knew what the name would be, too. "I was going to

continue with the Lackner name. I felt there was no reason to waste name recognition."

With Lackner Galerie, Baird decided to locate in north Brownsville because the area around Morrison Road near Las Tiendas has become a major shopping area. "We were starting fresh. We like this location," Baird pointed out. "Lackner Galerie feels like a brand new business." The Galerie in fact has an emphasis that differs from its predecessor: the stock is divided between fine jewelry, fashion jewelry and a large selection of affordable giftware and home décor items.

Baird rehired R.L. Lackner's experienced sales staff. She knew the suppliers she wanted to work with, too. The new shop image has enabled Baird to go to retailers' nirvana: the Dallas gift market. "We enjoy going shopping," she admitted. "Everyone has their opinions on what should be purchased and what will sell. Yet bridal will always be a big part of what we do."

While the business concept had changed, Baird intended that one important element from the old days be carried forward. "It's not the customers that I wanted to start fresh with," Baird laughed. Fabric-lined display cabinets, also relics of the old jewelry store, now hold an array of giftware suitable for housewarmings, engagements



Affordable jewelry and giftware draw customers to Lackner Galerie. (VBR)

and other celebrations. Low, lighted cabinets showcase fine jewelry including engagement rings.

Customers who discover Lackner Galerie appreciate the lightly scented, welcoming ambiance and the colorful displays of linens, Toy Watch brands, cook ware and hostess gift items from Squirrel brand nuts to packaged dip mixes. Baird mentioned one other important carryover from the historic store. "We have the same watch technician who is authorized to do Rolex repairs. We do repairs on all watches as well as jewelry repair."

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Q&A PORT OF BROWNSVILLE

Eduardo Campirano has been CEO and Port Director for the Port of Brownsville since 2007. The Port, at the end of the 17 mile long Brownsville Ship Channel, covers 40,000 acres, which is the biggest land area of any U.S. port. Campirano talked to VBR's editor about the Port and its niche in the global marketplace.

Q The addition of a third shipping lane to the Panama Canal by 2014 is predicted to increase shipping in the Gulf by 10 percent. Is that going to impact Brownsville?

A I believe there will be more trans-shipment opportunities in the Gulf. There's a lot of expectation of increased cargo around the Gulf, but the biggest ships will be going to the biggest ports. We won't be a Houston, but we will continue to do the things we do well: being an in-transit port, handling many commodities and managing our real estate.

Q What is the Port doing to attract new cus-

tomers? Who are your customers?

A We are a landlord port and have to generate revenue to fund operations. Port tenants lease property. Port tenants use the infrastructure, docks, storage and rail line. Some tenants are directly in the maritime trade, such as shipping lines, stevedoring companies and freight forwarders. Tenants like shipbreakers bring in old vessels and send out scrap iron. We have tenants, shipping agents and stevedoring companies all out marketing the port, all trying to attract users and new tenants. We're looking at every opportunity to import, export or store products for shipping. We have the docks, a deep channel and the capability to unload containers, but we don't have the congestion that the Port of Houston has. We are the terminus of the Gulf IntraCoastal Waterway and offer tenants multi-modal access and access to Mexico.

Q Has the economy had an effect on cargo in and out of Brownsville?

A It surely has. The numbers aren't what

they were at the peak in 2008, but our 2011 cargo numbers are much healthier, running well ahead of 2010. Our steel imports are up 70% over 2010. Liquid cargo-gas, lubricants, fuel oils- has increased every year.

Q What is the Port's major commodity?

A Our major commodity is liquid, at 50 percent of volume. Our principal bulk (dry) commodity is steel: coils, plates, scrap, pig iron, iron ore. The ship recycling businesses here generate scrap that is sold in the world market. We also handle equipment, containers, minerals and aggregates, and grain.

Q What percentage of cargo unloaded is in transit to and from Mexico?

A We are primarily an in-transit port; it accounts for 90 percent of our tonnage. We are the third ranking port in the nation in terms of in-transit cargo. Some liquids come in by pipeline and go out by barge. Steel customers



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in Monterrey receive metal through the Port and turn around and ship out refined steel.

Q How many tenants does the Port have?

A There are about 270 tenants with a total of 6,300 employed here. Even in the worst of times, no businesses at the Port closed down. We're proud of all our tenants. AmFELS is the largest. At peak it had 3000 employees and 500 subcontractors, and right now it is rehiring. We continue to see signs of growth among our existing operators, particularly in liquid cargo. Among the newest is Elite Fuel, which is aggressive about moving liquid products brought in by train and truck. We're in negotiations with potential tenants that could be exciting.

Q What is the Marine Highway project?

A When you move more freight by water, it is a safer, cleaner and less expensive mode of transportation. One of the things that's a big plus for maritime trade is the recognition that the answer to highway congestion could be to move some of that traffic to waterways. Instead of looking for more money to build more roads, we could find solutions by shifting to the existing marine highway. As the price of fuel climbs, people will look for opportunities to cut costs.

The Cross Gulf Container Expansion project, part of the Marine Highway, links Brownsville and Port Manatee (Tampa.) The commodities, coming primarily from Mexico, include floor tile, steel, sugar and orange juice concentrate. We are in discussion with another operator in Mobile (which has steel manufacturing plants) to balance the revenue stream and have more product coming to Texas.

Q What does the future hold?

A We believe Central and South America will be a big emerging market. The Port of Brownsville is positioning itself to be the gateway for that region. We expect another shipbreaker to begin operating in 2012 and to hire around 100 people. A Chinese company is getting permits to build a dock for its transshipping facility. We have had a lot of interest from renewable energy companies: a windmill developer, solar, biofuels.

We continue to work on the infrastructure at the Port, which needs to be maintained and expanded, particularly our storage areas. We have applied for a grant for a new cargo dock.

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INTERNET COMPANY PROTECTS TRANSLATORS

By Mark Reagan

Much like the popular consumer website, Angie's List, which compiles consumer ratings of companies, Payment Practices does the same thing, but with translators and a vast online database that spans a decade. Translators work with the written word whereas interpreters work with the spoken word.

Translators and interpreters log into the Payment Practices website and rate translation agencies they have worked with on two levels: were they paid on time and would they work with the agency again?

Ted Wozniak, a freelance translator who manages Payment Practices (www.paymentpractices.net), said those two levels are called a PP reliability score and a translator approval score. "They're rated by translators who have worked for those agencies and have direct experience on payment habits," he said. The PP reliability rates how timely translation agencies pay translators and interpreters. The translator approval score covers how likely a freelancer would be to work with an agency again.

Payment Practices is a convenient method for

business-savvy freelancers to see if a relationship with an agency is going to translate into a positive association for both entities. Subscribers to the site pay \$19.99 for a one-year subscription, with a free 7-day trial. The subscription's cost is a small fee for the valuable database, Wozniak said.

"I like to think of it more as like a credit check service. When I do work for an agency, I'm extending credit," he said. "I wait 30 days to get paid, which is pretty standard business. You have to ask yourself, 'Are these people worthy of extending credit to based on their past behavior?'"

According to Payment Practice's website, 9,630 translation agencies and clients worldwide are listed in the database. "And that's not even close to a quarter of them (translation agencies). I'm working very hard to get as many agencies in the world that I can find, and new ones pop up every day," Wozniak said.

Payment Practices is definitely an international operation with subscribers on every continent except Antarctica. However, most subscribers are either from North America or Western Europe. "But India and China are growing fast," Wozniak added.

The online database is the successor to Payment Practices list (PP list) on Yahoo Groups, started by Karin Adameczyk and launched in December of 1999. It was handed on to the late David Orpin and Wozniak. "When she started it, I was one of the first people to sign up for it. At one point it just got to be too much admin work, and then she turned it over to David and me," Wozniak said.

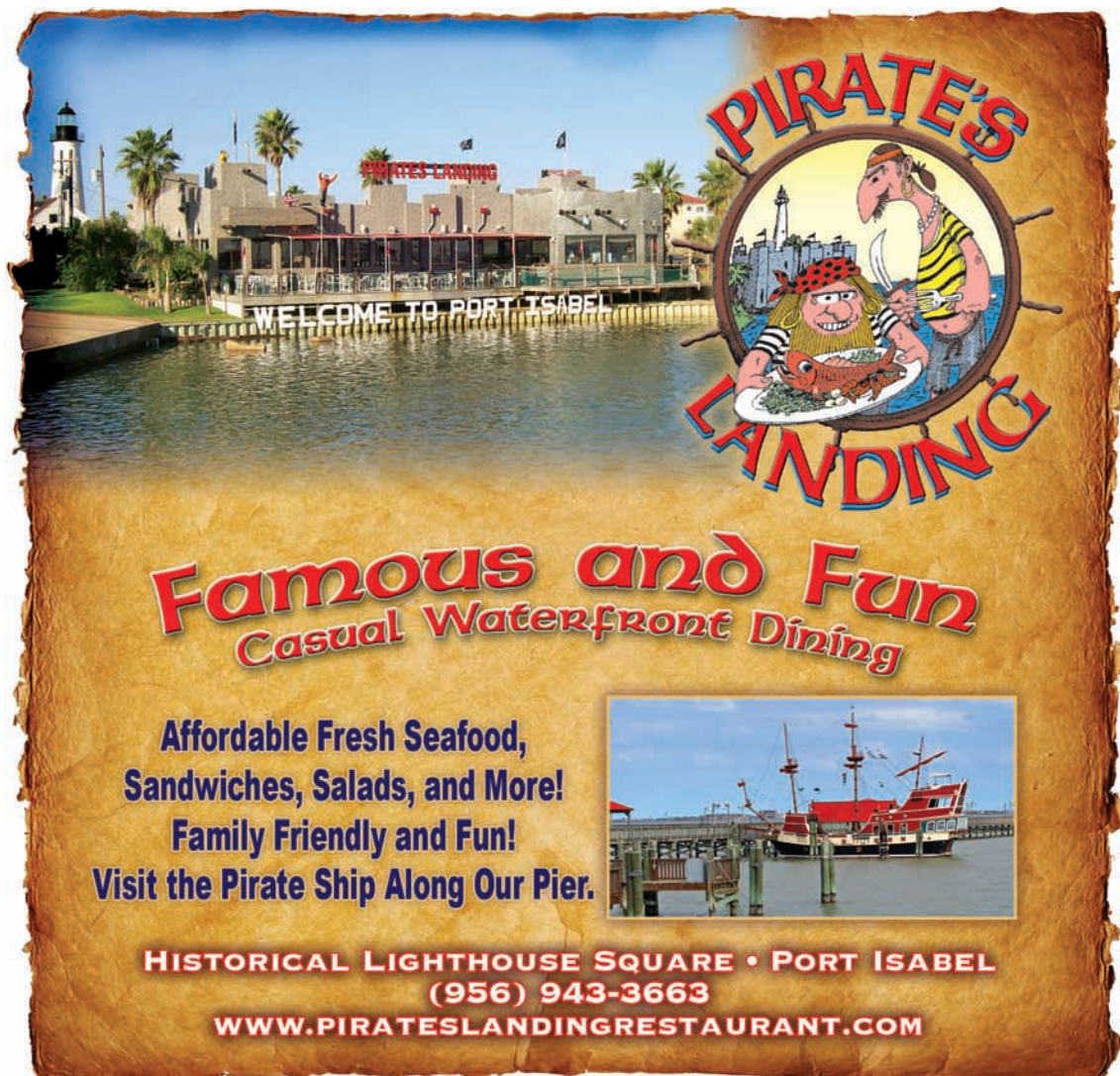
The two felt it was important to update the database and make sure interested parties had access to it. "I want to know who the black sheep out there are," said Wozniak. "Unfortunately, there are a very small number of agencies that make a habit of ripping off translators." Since Payment Practices is a subscription-based website, which utilizes its user's comments and ratings, there is really no risk of fraud within the website as not just anyone can access it.

In 2001, the list averaged 244 messages a month. Between 2001 and 2006, 12,000 messages were archived and in Feb. 2007, more than 3,300 people subscribed. And subscriptions continue to climb. In 2006 the list reached critical mass and moved to its current location on the Internet and Payment Practices was incorporated.

Wozniak has more ideas floating around in his head. "I've been seriously trying to figure out a price database that would be aimed at bringing price transparency to the market," he said. "That's extremely difficult to do because the number of variables are huge. Prices that are offered in the market depend not only on the location of the buyer, but what their market is like," he continued. "Somebody in the United States or Germany is probably willing to pay more for the same translation job than say, somebody in India or Vietnam because the standard of living is different."

Even translating German to English is priced differently than translating English to German, which is another example Wozniak used to illustrate his point. "So trying to figure out a way to get that data, or to limit the number of variables has been a big stumbling block for getting to that point," he said.

Wozniak said he would like a database where translation agencies rate the quality of work provided to them by freelance translators and interpreters. "It's different because it's a question of quality of work delivered on time, and interpreters and translators are two different skill sets," Wozniak said. "Again, trying to figure out what kind of information that is and making sure it is objective is a challenge."



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FIBERIO SPINS A FUTURE OF NANOFIBERS

By Eileen Mattei

FibeRio Technology's nanofiber-producing machinery is drawing international manufacturers and R&D companies to Sharyland Business Park. The attraction is FibeRio's disruptive technology: the capability of producing nanofibers quickly, cheaply and with less material.

Microscopic nanofibers (1,000 bundled nanofibers are as thick as a human hair) are capable of adding tensile strength, conductive and insulative capacity, corrosion resistance, water impermeability, bacterial barriers or thermal protection to a product, depending on what material is used to make the nanofiber.

Until FibeRio's technology breakthrough, the procedures for creating nanofibers—from nylon, polymers, ceramics, metals, etc. - have been prohibitively expensive, limiting their use. The company's Cyclone ForceSpinning™ Systems uses centrifugal force to spin out the gossamer thin layers which can be sandwiched into an incredibly wide range of products from industrial and medical filters, baby diapers and

ballistics to electrical capacitors. In operation, the Cyclone machinery appears to be spinning out wisps of white cotton-candy, but the wisps are, in fact, a mat of nanofibers.

The recent sale of FibeRio's first industrial nanofiber production machine, along with several R&D models, represents a remarkable research-to-commercialization path, the first of its kind by the University of Texas Pan Am. Dr. Karen Lozano, an endowed professor of Mechanical Engineering at UTPA, began the initial research on her idea of ForceSpinning technology in 2006. Deviating from the industry standard of using heat or electrical current (which can contaminate the fibers) to make nanofibers, Dr. Lozano worked out a process of centrifuging the materials and spinning out superfine nanofiber strands. In collaboration with Dr. Kamal Sakar, she perfected the process and applied



FibeRio CEO Ellery Buchanan, Chief Technology Officer Dr. Karen Lozano, and UTPA President Dr. Robert Nelsen welcomed guests to FibeRio's celebration of the research-to-commercialization success of nanofiber Force Spinning. (VBR)

for a patent, which is pending. The assistance of UTPA's Office of Innovation and Intellectual Property, Rapid Response Manufacturing Center and the School of Business combined with the Texas Emerging Technology Fund, McAllen EDC and McAllen Chamber of Commerce brought the technology to the marketplace.

"It takes a village to bring a FibeRio here," said UTPA President Dr. Robert Nelsen, commenting on the collaboration necessary. He noted the university's revised mission statement includes a commitment to job creation and building prosperity through entrepreneurship and commercialization.

A technology startup is not for faint-hearted. Jacquelyn Michel, Director of the Office of Innovation and Intellectual Property, first talked to Lozano in 2006. "People tend to forget how long everything will take." A major obstacle for Lozano was the \$40,000 required to get a Proof of Concept. Obtaining subsequent funding was not easy, either, despite the viability of the idea. Now money exists at the university to fund that early step.

FibeRio CEO Ellery Buchanan mentioned it took

"As fiber diameters decrease, desired mechanical properties increase in integrity. Specifically, strength to weight ratios are improved dramatically, reducing the probability of fiber failure."

An advertisement for First Community Bank. The background is green with white wavy lines. The text "Thinking Outside The Vault" is written in large, white, bold letters. Below this is the First Community Bank logo, which features a tree with roots and the text "FIRST COMMUNITY BANK" in green. At the bottom, there are four columns of text: "San Benito 399.3331", "Harlingen 428.4100", "Los Fresnos 399.3331", and "Brownsville 832.5105". At the very bottom, there is a website "www.FCBWEB.net", a "Member FDIC" logo, and a phone number "24 HR. TELEBANK 956.361.3661".

a year to compete for and win Emerging Technology Fund backing. Now the ETF is an equity owner. Cottonwood Technology Fund of El Paso and Silverton Partners capitalized the startup. FibeRio licenses the core technology from the Board of Regents of UTPA and since then has developed its own intellectual property piggybacked on the concept. Dr. Lozano is FibeRio's Chief Technology Officer.

"When you spin polymers into a nanofiber, you get a better barrier. We believe our technology is going to give a competitive edge to the users, both from perfecting the product and lowering the cost," said Roger Lipton, FibeRio's senior vice president for sales and marketing. "If you can save manufactures of diapers a few pennies per diaper, that's a huge edge." Nanofibers are so small that in filters, for example, the designated air or liquid passes through quickly and doesn't lose critical momentum, but it does capture target particles.

FibeRio manufactures three different systems (machines) for research and development, which are used by academia and industries alike. "The industrial companies aren't even going to buy lab-scale unit until they have made a strategic commitment and have a clear idea of where they would use nanofibers,"

Buchanan said. With the R&D tool, they can determine the viability of the products incorporating nanofibers and work out production details. Then they can turn to FibeRio to fabricate the industrial equipment that can be integrated into a production line.

The manufacturer has brought in specialized talent from Texas and the U.S. "We are absolutely talking about high technology jobs, high paying jobs for highly educated people. And we are growing," said Buchanan. FibeRio's workforce includes engineers of every stripe: electrical, materials, mechanical.

Representatives from corporations in the U.S., Japan, Korea, India and South America have traveled to McAllen to talk to FibeRio. Norma and Samuel Torres of Amaida Machine Shop in Edinburg have toured the facility, as well, to see the end product Cyclone for which they fabricated the metal-frame components.



The Cyclone ForceSpinning machine represents disruptive technology in nanofiber production. . (VBR)

FibeRio is the first but will not be the last research-to-commercialization to come out of UPTA, Michel asserted. Other research is in the pipeline. "We are actively educating our faculty (on the importance of commercializing research.) One of the things that has changed in the UT system is that patents are being viewed positively in the tenure process."

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EFFICIENCY TRAINING RESULTS IN LEANER OPERATION

By Eileen Mattei

“We’re seeing more than a tenfold return on our investment in Six Sigma training,” said Joe Olmeda, VP of Manufacturing at BSN Medical in the Rio Grande Valley. The Reynosa-Hidalgo facilities of the global company make and distribute fracture management components, the supplies that are used to protect and immobilize fractured arms and legs.

The seven BSN managers who trained for the Six Sigma Black Belt in 2011 have applied their new skills to fine tune the manufacturing and logistic processes at the maquila. The volume of material scrap has been greatly reduced, and the amount of resin needed for fabrication has diminished, Olmeda noted. “Savings in those two areas alone has more than repaid the investment.

BSN has plants in dozens of countries making medical devices that include bandaging, compression therapy and orthopedic braces. Its medical products are typically ranked first, second, or third in their mar-

kets. Headquartered in Germany, BSN pursues a corporate goal of continuous improvement and has chosen Six Sigma as one means of achieving the goal. Olmeda said each BSN plant has the freedom to select its Six Sigma instructors. Locally, TMAC at UTPA is Olmeda’s choice for English speakers and Monterrey Tech for Spanish speakers.

In the Valley, BSN first sent seven upper level employees to Six Sigma training: four manufacturing managers, a quality manager, a materials director and a financial director. Through hands-on exercises and statistics-heavy tracking, the new Black Belts got a thorough grounding in the tools that can help manufacturers turn out products with next-to-zero variation from a standard and with reduced waste.

Training the upper level of management first was the easiest way to get the work culture to change, Olmeda said. “Between them, the managers impacted all 600 people working at BSN. They are at the top of the pyramid and what they learned flows down and affect everyone else.”



Joe Olmeda displays some of the fracture management products of BSN Medical. (VBR)

“We like to have a Six Sigma sponsor for each project,” Olmeda continued. The sponsor does not run the project but understands its dimensions and objectives. Now each Black Belt takes care of a specific BSN area and is expected to do three projects per year. From those three projects, the manager is expected to come up with savings that totals five times their salary. Cost avoidance is as valuable as cost savings. Exceeding the goal results in a performance increase higher than average while missing it brings a lower increase than average.

In 2012, BSN is starting a second round of Six Sigma meetings, this one directed at mid-level staffers, including logistics and customs service managers. “This will reinforce the new culture,” Olmeda said. “People on lower rungs of the ladder will learn from their bosses. They will be able to understand why things are being done a new way. If they understand their piece of the puzzle, they can contribute to the team.”

Trickle down training will be evident in three formats: English, Spanish and Visual Workplace, a system of red, yellow and green lights that updates workers if they are on track to achieving production objectives.

Olmeda said one of the big benefits of implementing Six Sigma is the consistency it brings to reports. “Now every project and presentation is in the same format, so all the details and results are presented the same way, in one format. Previously we had nine different formats. We’ve changed a lot, but there is still a little bit of comparing apples and oranges.” By quantifying product improvement and cost savings, Six Sigma enables BSN’s Black Belts to pursue projects that increase the company’s competitive edge.

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UTB NURTURES RESEARCH SCIENTISTS AND ATTRACTS FUNDING

By Eileen Mattei

“Scientists are born in labs—by inspiring them and engaging them,” said Dr. Juliet Garcia, President of the University of Texas-Brownsville, speaking at the recently opened Biomedical Research Building. Accompanied by professors of nanoscience, genetics, microbiology, neuroscience and nursing, Dr. Garcia discussed how the number of undergraduate and graduate students working in UTB science labs has increased as research grants have grown. More than \$6.4 million was awarded to UTB for FY 2011 with Gravitational Wave Astronomy, Biomedical and Computer Science the top areas of research. Biomedical grants brought in 39 percent of the funding.

“Research is an important tool in education,” said neuroscientist Luis Colom, who is UTB’s Vice President for Research. Dr. Colom, who came to UTB with a National Institute of Health research grant 10 years ago, said research makes students develop critical thinking skills, changing how they learn and solve problems. Students who establish a relationship with a research professor get motivated to pursue scientific knowledge. They collaborate and co-author studies.

Dr. Michael Lehker, Professor and Chair of the Department of Biomedicine, is working with other faculty members to develop a bachelor’s degree in biomedicine. A BS with a nanoscience concentration will be available in fall 2012.

As much as students need research professors, faculty benefit from having eager students. “My research is made possible by graduate and undergraduate students. We are collaborators,” said Dr. Saraswathy Nair, Assistant Professor in the Department of Biomedicine. Her research, with students, on the genetic factors and metabolic dysfunction of obesity has shown an association of stress inflammation genes with obesity. In an area known for health disparities. Dr. Anne Rentfro is researching the high incidences of diabetes and interventions that delay the onset, connecting research to the community.

Dr. Garcia said the UT system has committed to investing \$30 million to recruit more stellar professors of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) to UTPA, UTB, and the Regional Academic Health Centers. In the long run, the faculty will be creating qualified applicants for the planned UT medical and allied health schools in the Valley. “We will develop

programs that will prepare our students to be admitted to competitive programs,” Dr. Lehker said.

Nanoscience, specifically the development of thermosensitive nanomedia for drug delivery to cancer sites, is a specialty of Dr. Karen Martirosyan, Associate Professor in the Department of Physics and Astronomy, who is working under a NSF grant. The FDA is reviewing his application for the new type of medical device. “To commercialize research you need technology,” Dr. Colom added. “The key is to improve life through research.”

The university will break ground in a few months on an adjacent Biomedical Research building with \$3.9 million in funding from the National Institute of Health.

Dr. Emilio Garrido, an Associate Professor in the Department of Biomedicine, has received grants from the U.S. Department of Defense and the National Institutes of Health to study epilepsy. “A critical part of the research is my students,” he said. Mentoring



Dr. Sara Nair works with two assistants in the Biomedical Research lab where research is underway on obesity. (VBR)

them and guiding their own research assures them a better education and a brighter future.


“The Biomedical Research building is a huge step forward for the capabilities of our researchers,” said Dr. Alan Artibise, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

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EMPLOYMENT PROFESSIONALS: PUZZLE SOLVERS

By Susan LeMiles Holmes

Each year 9.7 million people are hired by staffing firms to report for work at companies in the U.S. Sixty-four percent of management and executive positions are filled by third-party recruiters.....these guys definitely do something right.

Whether you are outsourcing your entire HR function to a multinational staffing firm, using a specialty recruiter working on straight commission or engaging the world's most elite executive search firm, the rules of getting the most for your money are the same - good communication.

Start with picking the right type of firm. To outsource your entire personnel function, you need a staffing company or an HR outsourcing organization big enough to have the financial resources to front your payroll, to have adequate staff and technology to fill your needs (recruiting, benefit processing, specialized workman's compensation requirements), and enough legal savvy to manage the regulatory issues employers have to deal with today.

To identify and hire a specific employee who can give you a competitive edge, take a department to a higher operational level, represent you as an individual

in business situations or even turn your company around, you need a firm that does not spend its time processing claims and doing payroll. You want to work with a firm that spends all of its time networking and identifying talent in your field or industry.

The most effective recruiters usually choose either a horizontal or vertical market that provides synergy for both themselves and their employer clients. For example, they may choose to place accountants in all industries (horizontal) or they may choose to place employees in the oil and gas industry (vertical). In either case, every business conversation they have is a "revenue producing activity."

Yes, both staffing and recruiting are businesses where time and knowledge is what's for sale. Sounds like your law firm or your accounting firm, doesn't it? The best ones become your business partners, just like these other professionals and you will get most for your money if you allow them to serve you. Like any successful relationship, understanding and respect are the keys. Choose a staffing professional or recruiter you like as a person, build the trust necessary for very honest communication and agree on a process that accomplishes your mutual goals. Pick someone who listens well...

..and you do the same.

Every business has to focus its efforts based on real potential to generate income. Staffing companies and recruiters have to seek the most likely profitable assignments possible, just like you do. If you want employment agencies to work hard for you, position yourself as someone who is committed to filling the open job in a timely way. Position your job opening as an opportunity the best candidate in the market would want and your company as a team player in the hiring process.

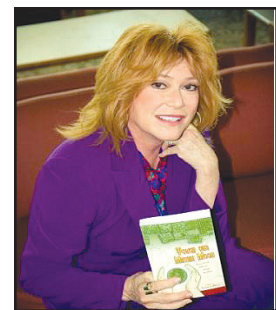
Don't order employees like fast food. Give recruiters information, a written job description that includes more than skill and experience requirements. Placement professionals do their best work when they have a description of the duties, the tough challenges that arise, even the events of a typical day or week. Identifying sales points about the job, company, future opportunities or even the supervisor for whom the person will work will get you the best committed candidate possible. If you need help clarifying any of these things, good recruiters can do this.

The more time you spend with these professionals when you place the order, the more likely your expectations will be met. A good recruiter asks a lot of questions, repeats a synopsis back to you that indicates he understands your needs and bravely embraces clarification. Be honest about the obstacles you face. Good recruiters are puzzle solvers and many will spend time with you discussing your options before taking your assignment. Take advantage of their up-to-the-minute perspective. They typically engage in 25 - 50 business conversations a day regarding the very problems you face in hiring.

When it comes to negotiating price, even though employment services are intangible, remember, it simply costs more to design and produce an Avalon over a Corolla. The price or mark-up you are quoted reflects the cost and the amount of attention that will be given to your project.

Recruiting and staffing services performed properly feel better than going to the doctor. A great recruiter can say, "Take two aspirin and call me in the morning. I've been working on getting you the right people all year!"

Susan LeMiles Holmes is Director of Career Services at Texas State Technical College and a published novelist. You can inquire about hiring TSTC graduates by emailing susan.holmes@harlingen.tstc.edu or learn about Susan's novel set in The Valley, Touch the Mayan Moon at www.susanlemiles.com



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HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGES: THE MEDICAL SUPERHIGHWAY

By Javier Vasquez

Every major industry in the U.S. relies on the exchange of information over a secured network. Each day, millions of electronic exchanges occur to facilitate business transactions and communications that provide both the sender and receiver a high level of operational efficiency. The banking industry and military are two examples that have for years utilized highly secured systems to transfer sensitive information around the world. Health care now sits in the on-deck circle ready to take its swing at the information exchange process through the use of a health information exchange or HIE.

In 2010, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) received a \$28.8 million award from the Office of National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) to fund state planning and implementation of electronic health information networks to support higher quality, safer and more efficient health care.

The HHSC contracted the Texas Health Services Authority (THSA) to promote the participation of a broad spectrum of stakeholders, such as hospitals, insurance groups, physicians and consumer groups, to develop and implement HIEs in Texas. The THSA implemented the Local HIE Grant Program to partially fund planning, development and operations of local and regional HIE networks.

Through this grant program, two awards went to Valley-based entities: Rio One Health Network and Rio Grande Valley HIE (RGV HIE.) The Rio One Health Network is proposing to develop a two county (Starr and Hidalgo) HIE that connects 650 physicians and seven hospitals. In contrast, the Rio Grande Valley HIE proposal casts a wider net by connecting 26 hospitals and physicians located across nine counties which include: Brooks, Cameron, Hidalgo, Jim Hogg, Kenedy, Starr, Webb, Willacy and Zapata.

State and Federal guidelines will require all functional HIEs to develop protocols for the exchange of information between regional, state and federal HIEs. At some point in the near future, the efforts of the two local HIEs will overlap and benefit one another and connect with the other 14 Texas HIEs.

The goal of all HIEs is to facilitate access to, and retrieval of, clinical information to provide safe, timely, efficient and effective patient-centered care. By having access to all patient data, health care providers can reduce time and expense associated with duplicate tests. When clinical records are available at the point of care, patients receive better care.

One common scenario is the transfer of patients between hospitals. A patient from Willacy County is visiting relatives in Rio Grande City. An accident results in the patient getting transported to the emergency room in Starr County but requires specialty treatment at a hospital in Cameron County or Driscoll Hospital. In an HIE connected environment, the emergency room team would have real-time access to the electronic medical record of the patient from the physician, a record of medicines obtained from area pharmacies and any historical results from laboratories or imaging centers. With a broad health record on hand, the ER team could provide a better assessment and diagnosis of the patient and execute a thorough plan of action. While the patient is readied for transfer, the CT scans and lab results are forwarded to the receiving hospital where surgical personnel view the information on a computer screen and make the proper preparations to receive the patient and take him or her straight into surgery.

Real-time information is the driving force that provides

industries with the ability to create efficiencies in their processes and through the Rio One Health Network and Rio Grande Valley HIE. Our area will be a part of the medical superhighway.

Some HIE Benefits:

- Improved patient safety.
- Reduce chance of medical error.
- Better workflow efficiency and lower administrative costs.
- Enhanced communication between hospitals, laboratories, pharmacies and physicians.
- Easier access and retrieval of clinical data.
- Records come directly from the original source where they are stored.
- Improved audit trails and chain of custody.
- Reduced duplicate testing

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RECYCLED PALLETS HELPS KEEP COSTS DOWN

By Eileen Mattei

Cases of crackers and canned goods arrive at Valley grocery stores shrink-wrapped on pallets. New appliances, electronics and surgical gloves cross the border on pallets. Cabbages, citrus and carrots, boxed and stacked on pallets, are shipped north. Pallets may not make the world go around, but they are an essential element of trade.

A pallet company, under various names, has operated for over 25 years in the midst of McAllen's produce packing district on North 23rd Street. In 2001, IFCO Systems N.A. acquired the property and operates a Pallet Management Services (PMS) plant there where it retrieves, reconditions and resupplies wood pallets. But as the saying goes, this is not your grandfather's pallet company.

"The majority of our facility's pallets sold are constructed of 100% recycled material, but we also provide some of our customers with 100% new southern yellow pine (SYP) lumber pallets. We also have capabilities of remanufacturing a combination of both recycled and new lumber material to meet

special project needs," said Tony Garza, general manager in McAllen.

The smell of fresh-cut wood and the sound of hammers hitting nails set the stage at the yard where towering rows of recycled and new pallets stand ready for use. On average the plant fabricates 6,000 new SYP pallets per month in addition to approximately 24,000 recycled/remanufactured ones. "Inbound and outbound

volumes vary day-to-day and month-to-month, especially during the busy months of seasonal produce," Garza explained. "All in all, our McAllen plant is projecting to complete the 2011 calendar year with close to 700,000 pallets."

The recycling and environmental advantages of wooden pallets have turned into a significant sales tool. In an era of cost consciousness and waste reduction, pallets are recycled and rebuilt instead of being trashed. "IFCO pallets are 100% reusable, recyclable and come from a renewable resource. By recycling over 73.3 million pallets nationally last year, IFCO's efforts resulted in over 1.8 million tons of lumber being diverted from landfills," said Garza. "Our recycled pallets meet or exceed the capability of new pallets at a fraction of the cost."

Given its location, surrounded by produce packers such as Val Verde Vegetables and Del Monte, IFCO takes seasonal surges in stride. "Our facility typically supplies recycled pallets between the months of October through June to our seasonal customers in transporting fruits and vegetables such as citrus, a variety of vegetable greens, onions, watermelon and cantaloupes outside of the Rio Grande Valley to grocery retail chain stores," Garza added.

IFCO offers pallet tracking and recycling as way to save customers' money. "Each of our customers has their own unique supply chain and operational needs, so each customer's solution is tailored specifically to them," Garza said. IFCO quantifies projected savings based on pallet specification and service features such as Just-in-Time delivery and Vendor Managed Inventory. "Yes, most of our customers save both time and money by outsourcing to IFCO, because it allows them to focus on their core business instead of being distracted by pallet management."



New and recycled pallets surround general manager Tony Garza. (VBR)

In addition, IFCO's pallet professionals recommend pallet specification and/or logistical changes that may reduce pallet costs.

Many IFCO customers simply want a reliable supply of quality pallets, but many others, typically larger companies, opt for additional services included Vendor Managed Inventory and Just in Time delivery. IFCO supplies the proprietary logistics software PalTrax free of charge for customers to use or directly manage pallets as a service. Through the system, pallet activity is centrally monitored and available online round-the-clock. To retrieve pallets from retailers, IFCO has a 5,000 unit company-owned fleet.

The McAllen facility is equipped with a heat treatment kiln chamber that allows the company to comply with the ISPM-15 (International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures) regulations. ISPM-15 prevents the international shipment of wooden products such as pallets unless they have been heat treated or fumigated with methyl bromide and stamped or branded with a mark of compliance. The treatment stops the spread of disease and insects that could negatively affect plants or ecosystems.

"Our McAllen plant was actually one of the first pallet facilities to receive a heat treatment stamp from an accredited third party," Garza said.

IFCO's local business continues to thrive, Garza concluded. "As members of the community ourselves, we are fully committed to the growth and prosperity of area businesses. As they grow, we grow with them."

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SPOTLIGHT



Alta Monroe of the Padre Elite Team (RE/MAX 1st Choice-SPI) has been named South Padre Island "Realtor of the Year." Gayle Hood, the other member of the Padre Elite Team, has been sworn in as 2012 President of the South Padre Island Board of Realtors.

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VALLEY BAPTIST MEDICAL CENTER

ORTHOPEDECS

Valley Baptist - Harlingen awarded first Joint Replacement "Gold Seal of Approval™" South of San Antonio



Valley Baptist Medical Center-Harlingen has become the first hospital south of San Antonio to be certified with a "Gold Seal of Approval" for knee and hip replacement surgeries.

The hospital was certified by the Joint Commission, an accreditation agency that evaluates more than 18,000 healthcare organizations and programs in the United States.

VBMC-Harlingen is now one of only 11 hospitals in Texas which have the "disease-specific" specialty certification in knee and hip replacements.

"This certification for our excellence in joint replacement is a testament to the expertise, dedication and care of Dr. Rick Bassett and our entire joint replacement team at Valley Baptist, including all of our orthopedic surgeons and nursing and rehab staff," said Bill Adams, CEO of Valley Baptist-Harlingen.

Mr. Adams noted that the Joint Commission survey team gave the Valley Baptist joint replacement team a perfect score – without issuing a single "requirement for improvement."

For more information on knee, hip and other joint replacement procedures, please consult your physician and visit www.ValleyBaptist.net.



Dr. Rick Bassett, Orthopedic Surgeon and Medical Director of Valley Baptist-Harlingen's Orthopedics / Joint Replacement Program, has performed more than 10,000 knee replacement and 2,000 hip replacement surgeries at Valley Baptist.

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RINGING IN THE NEW YEAR FOR YOUR BUSINESS

By Jim Navarro

Did you take stock of 2011's unfulfilled New Year's resolutions and include them atop the 2012 list?

If you're like most executives and small business owners, the resolution to "grow revenue by focusing on sales" is high on your list of New Year's resolutions for 2012! Still, year-after-year, it seems that while exploiting unexpected opportunities or putting out fires, focusing on sales always falls by the wayside for many busy entrepreneurs.

But there is one way to grow sales revenue. Get the largest buyer of goods and services on your side: the U.S. Government. "The major reason to go after government contracts is purely the size of the market," said Marc Amtower, author of *Selling to the Government*.

Some things to consider: U.S. Government agencies want to work with certified, small businesses, their spending is consistent, and they pay their bills. The process to obtain certification and meet their requirements may scare off some entrepreneurs, but contracting with the U.S. government is actually big business for small business. Plus, there is help in working with these

agencies!

"The U.S. sets aside billions of dollars targeted to small businesses," said Hector Landez, director for the Rio South Texas Regional Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) at The University of Texas-Pan American (UTPA) in Edinburg. "Here at home, over two million dollars have been awarded to small businesses, creating and retaining jobs throughout South Texas."

Business owners interested in obtaining government contracts at the local, state and federal level should seek out PTAC services. A center of the UTPA Business Development & Innovation Group, the PTAC holds educational workshops and frequently collaborates with agency buyers and the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to answer questions about contracting rules, assist companies in obtaining door-opening certifications and identify selling opportunities.

Nancy Russell, president of Rhino Contractors, LLC, is grateful for the technical assistance. "PTAC was instrumental in guiding me through the process and paperwork of becoming certified. Additionally, the team at the PTAC office frequently notifies me of [contracting] job opportunities within my market areas,"

she said. In 2011, Rhino Contractors was awarded hundreds of thousands of dollars in federal contracts.

"We have available resources to bring business owners into gainful contracting partnerships with the U.S. Government," remarked Landez, and he strongly exhorts, "Don't leave money on the table."

Cross out one of your 2012 resolutions by calling the UTPA PTAC at 956/665-8931 for information and assistance on business growth opportunities through contracting. The UTPA PTAC is also found online at www.utpa.edu/ptac.

Jim Navarro is a Training Coordinator with the Rio South Texas Regional Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC). He manages the training and outreach component of the PTAC and collaborates with resource partners to bring procurement training to businesses in the Rio Grande Valley. The PTAC is a component of the UTPA BDI Group and provides technical guidance for business owners who desire to do business with the government. Contact the UTPA PTAC at (956) 665-8931 for additional information on their business counseling and training.

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FRI	Dec. 23	Bakersfield	at RGV-7:00 pm
FRI	Jan. 6	Dakota	at RGV-7:00 pm
SAT	Jan. 7	Dakota	at RGV-7:00 pm
FRI	Feb. 10	Austin	at RGV-7:00 pm
SAT	Feb. 11	Austin	at RGV-7:00 pm
SAT	Feb. 18	Canton	at RGV-7:00 pm
FRI	Mar. 23	Los Angeles	at RGV-7:00 pm
FRI	Mar. 30	Tulsa	at RGV-7:00 pm
FRI	Apr. 6	Reno	at RGV-7:00 pm
SAT	Apr. 7	Reno	at RGV-7:00 pm

8 Game

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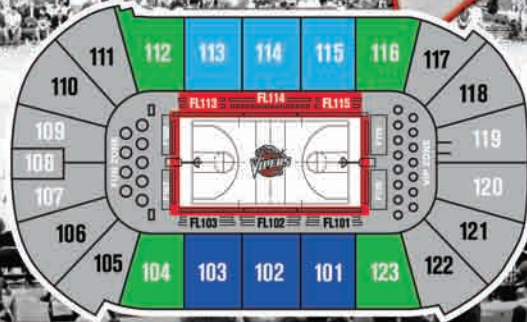
- Personal Account Rep
- 10% discount on merchandize
- Same seat for every game

SAT	Nov. 26	Erie	at RGV-7:00 pm
SAT	Dec. 10	Austin	at RGV-7:00 pm
FRI	Dec. 23	Bakersfield	at RGV-7:00 pm
FRI	Jan. 6	Dakota	at RGV-7:00 pm
FRI	Feb. 10	Austin	at RGV-7:00 pm
SAT	Feb. 18	Canton	at RGV-7:00 pm
FRI	Mar. 23	Los Angeles	at RGV-7:00 pm
FRI	Apr. 7	Reno	at RGV-7:00 pm



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