

Valley Business Report

Pro-Valley...Pro-Business

Sign up for VBR e-Brief at
www.ValleyBusinessReport.com

Volume III, Issue 12

www.valleybusinessreport.com

August 2012

Backyard Paradise

Should you take the plunge?

 Find us on
Facebook

"SHE ENCOURAGED US TO FOLLOW OUR DREAMS"

- Wilbur Wright



From Dreams to Reality - Invention to Marketplace

A dream is only a dream, unless you know what to do with it. And if Orville and Wilbur Wright hadn't followed their mother's advice, "to follow their dreams," aviation as we know it may have taken a very different path. Tropical Texas Regional Center of Innovation and Commercialization exists to inspire technology innovation and commercialization, create technology companies and grow them into viable businesses in our region. It is our goal to help new; early and mid-stage technology ventures make their dreams and ideas become a reality through the Texas Emerging Technology Fund (ETF.)

The ETF was created by the Texas Legislature in 2005 to expedite innovation and commercialization of research by providing much needed capital for start-up and growth stage technology companies. The Tropical Texas RCIC helps to identify, evaluate and submit promising proposals from our region to the ETF Advisory Committee. We work closely with applicants in assisting with ETF proposal development, post-proposal debriefings, and commercialization activities. In addition, we are a strong focal point to increasing cooperation and spurring collaboration between industrial, financial, and academic entities.

If you dream of taking a great idea to the marketplace, maybe we can help. For more information on our services or the Texas Emerging Technology Fund call **956-364-4503** to schedule an appointment or go to <http://governor.state.tx.us/ecodev/etf/>.



2424 Boxwood, Suite 101-E Harlingen, Texas
956-364-4503

Go Fish

Much of my childhood was spent with a cane pole or rod and reel casting into creeks, ponds and bayous of south Louisiana. My best friends and I would ride our bikes or take off on foot to a plethora of fishing holes, most fortunately within a mile of my home. No matter how busy life gets, we remember these times – times where a stringer of perch, handful of catfish or a pair of two-pound bass gave us the feeling of a lifetime. Why? ‘Cause it was summer, school was out and we were just hours away from a fresh meal.

When patience didn’t call for waiting on the cork to sink or the repetitive casting and reeling, my mother and I would set lines early in the morning in Redwood Creek. Just after sunset, we returned to the white, sandy banks of a place that made time stand still. There were no phones, no emails, no deadlines: pure paradise. As we stepped into the cool, deep waters to lift the sunken lines we would salivate at our catches, all except when a Cottonmouth spoiled our expectations and scared the daylights out of us.

Riding back to the house on my 3-wheeler we talked about which sides we’d en-

joy tonight with our fresh fish, and what time we’d head back to check our lines in the morning. When those are the biggest worries of your day, life is good.

My mother had a knack for which bends in the creeks, which spots under weeping willows and which small but deep holes is where we should cast, set our lines or drop a shiner or night crawler. The woman loved fishing. And she was good at it. She told me not long before she passed, “If there’s not fishing in heaven, I ain’t going.” I laughed but she told me, “No, I’m serious.”

Her philosophy was educated but simple. Go where the fish are, use the right bait and hook for the right fish, and you’ll bring home what you went after. A country, semi-Cajun lesson in Fishing 101 doesn’t get less complicated than that. This lesson is also a crash course in Business 101.

We all go fishing every day. We leave the office looking for customers. Hold on, are we actually leaving the office to go find the customer? Too many times we depend on telemarketing to do our job for us. If we’re looking down (typing emails and texts), we aren’t looking up – into the eyes of prospective clients. If that’s our “sales approach”, then we aren’t doing justice to the principle of face-to-face marketing. Sure, emails and texts are good tools but will NEVER

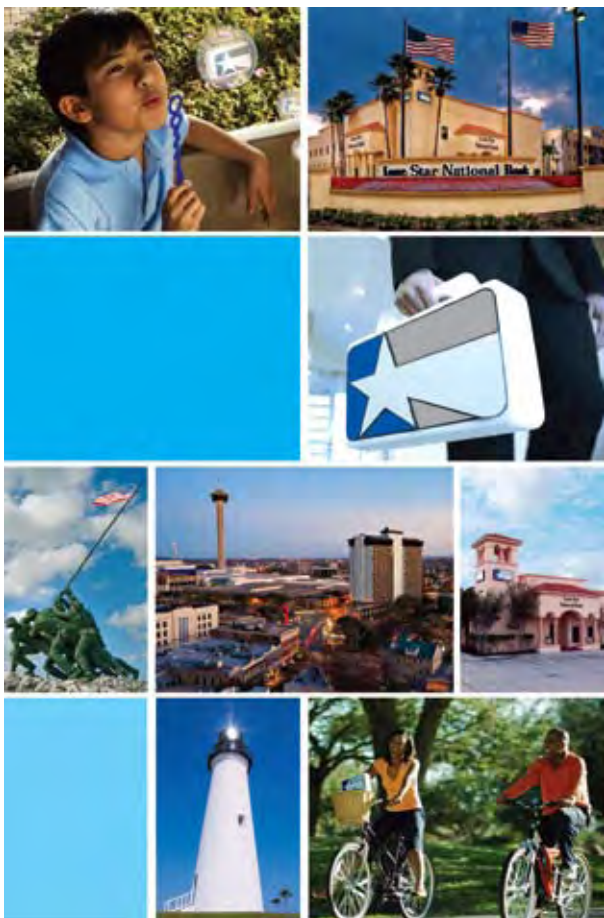
replace the true art of “fishing for customers.” When was the last time you sent an email or text and reeled in the catch of the day? Yep, I’m talking about a red snapper, speckled trout, or your company’s largest customer.

Now that we’re in the boat, where do we find the fish? Each business is different, and one company’s customer may be different from another company’s. As kids, we knew if we wanted to catch a 5 lb. bass, we had to fish certain ponds. Same in business. You’ve got to go to the fish. They aren’t coming to you. So load up and go fishing. There’s nothing like bringing home a fresh catch. If mom said it, it’s gotta be true.

Todd Breland
General Manager
Valley Business Report
VBR e-Brief
956 310 8953

todd@valleybusinessreport.com
www.valleybusinessreport.com

“Connecting You To Local Pro-Business News”



Now Open On Sundays

at 2109 S. 10th Street in McAllen across La Plaza Mall

From Starr County to Cameron County, from the Rio Grande Valley to San Antonio, Lone Star National Bank is growing across South Texas. Our banking centers throughout South Texas are providing the resources and the expertise to help Texas businesses grow and prosper, communities expand and invest in the future, and individuals and families succeed in achieving their dreams.

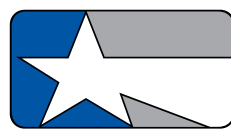
Doing so has helped us rapidly grow to more than 2 billion in total assets. **Lone Star National Bank, Bringing the Bank to You in the Rio Grande Valley and San Antonio.**

Lobby Hours

Monday - Thursday 9:00 am - 4:00 pm
Friday 9:00 am - 6:00 pm
Saturday 9:00 am - 4:00 pm
Sunday 11:00 am - 4:00 pm

Motor Bank Hours

Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m. - 6:30 pm
Saturday 8:00 am - 4:00 pm
Sunday 11:00 am - 4:00 pm



Lone Star National BankSM

1-800-580-0322
www.lonestarnationalbank.com



Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Backyard Paradise	5
Q&A Banking	7
SpawGlass: Employee Owned.....	8
Restaurant Survival	10
Harlingen Tire Recycling.....	12
Labor Statistics	14
Alhambra	16
Contracts	18
Osprey	20
HR Column.....	22
KBW	24
Spotlight	26

Visit www.ValleyBusinessReport.com to view more information about PSR, sign up for VBR e-Brief and stay updated on the RGV's pro-business news all month.

Valley Business Report Staff

Editor

Eileen Mattei
eileen@valleybusinessreport.com

General Manager

Todd Breland
todd@valleybusinessreport.com

Director of Operations

Crystal S. Breland
crystal@valleybusinessreport.com

Marketing Consultant

Beth Walters
beth@valleybusinessreport.com

Circulation & Distribution Coordinator

TJ Soule
tj@valleybusinessreport.com

Production Art Director

Beth Walters
beth@valleybusinessreport.com

Editor, VBR e-Brief

Angey Murray
angey@valleybusinessreport.com

Web Design

MPC Studios

Philosophy: We are a pro-business publication providing in-depth perspectives on business trends and creating a forum in which business leaders can exchange ideas and information affecting the local community's economy.

Letters to the Editor: 300 words or less. E-mailed: editorial@valleybusinessreport.com
Please include your full name and city of residence.

© 2012 Valley Business Report is published by VBR Media
Office: (956) 310-8953 P.O. Box 2332 Mission, Texas 78573

Tuesday, Sep. 4th

**MAYFIELD PARK
1419 S. SAN ANTONIO AVE.
SAN JUAN, TEXAS 78589
6PM-10PM
(956) 223-2400**

SAN JUAN POLICE NATIONAL

NIGHT OUT

★ 2012 ★

SAN JUAN POLICE • COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

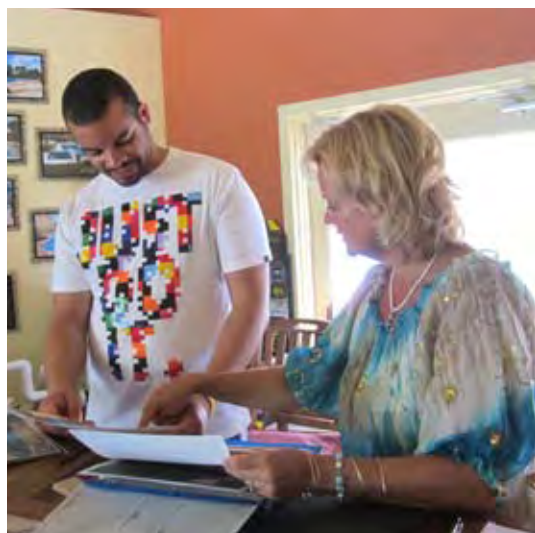
Great Escapes Every Day

By Eileen Mattei

Seductive backyard paradises centered on tropically landscaped pools are tucked away in numerous Valley neighborhoods. Lush, cooling oases in the summer heat, these swimming pools tempt their owners to never leave the tranquility and the fun of their own private Aruba. Producing that vision of Shangri-La takes the combined effort of Valley pool builders, landscapers and nurseries and pool service firms.

Entry level pools cost \$22,000 and up and hold between ten and fifteen thousand gallons, which is enough to cool down a crowd of family and friends, between burgers and brews. That barebones approach doesn't work for Chris Myers who started Eden Swimming Pools and Landscaping in 2007. "We look at the complete environment when we build a pool. The bulk of our work is showplace pools. Showplace pools add to the environment, even if nobody swims." Myers is currently building a show pool with custom-made, peacock blue glass tiles on the water line, white travertine decking, outdoor and underwater colored lighting, specialty pumps circulating 30,000 to 100,000 gallons of water and idyllic landscaping.

"We normally do two to three large projects a year and about 40 other projects. Because we do good work, we tend to stay real busy," Myers said. "We are different in that we never build the same pool twice." Some of the larger projects take nine months to complete and can include kitchen, waterfalls, bridges and negative edge pools where the water flows over one rim and drops into a catchment area for recirculation. The cost can top \$100,000. "My happiest customers are the ones who can write the checks and not worry about it," he said.



Linda Seery shows a potential customer photographs of South Texas Pools' work. (Courtesy)

The McAllen company received the 2009 award for best pool remodel in the country, Myers added.

Alan Crockett owns Hilco, a tarp and awning company, so it was easy for him to design and install the commercial-grade shade cloth that is stretched imaginatively over his pool and waterfall. The shade keeps the water cool enough (mid 80s) in the summer for Crockett to enjoy twice a day swims. In the winter, solar heating (via coiled black tubing) keeps the pool in the mid-70s.

3-D pool images

"I still do everything old-school. I draw the design and color it (with magic markers.) It kick starts a project," said Kelly Norman who has run South Texas Pools for 28 years. But the company, which builds about 55 pools a year, also uses 3-D pool design software which includes the landscaping. "It's a sales tool, because some people can't visualize what the pool will look like in their yard." The 3-D presentation almost needs an audio track because the sound of water is so important, Norman said. Pump controls can be set to alter the sound of water from sprays to falls to trickles.


This Hamlin built pool includes a river rock feature. (Courtesy)



South Texas Pools recently opened an Expressway frontage showroom in La Feria that has brought a surge of customers beyond the usual satisfied-customer referrals. The showroom suggests options for stainless steel outdoor kitchens, palapas and distinctive Balinese pottery. Colored LED lights, both underwater and in the landscaping, enhance the tropical island ambiance.



Markets fluctuate. Relationships shouldn't.



Howard Tozzo, Jr.
Branch Manager
howard.tozzo@wellsfargoadvisors.com

William Werley, Sr.
Financial Advisor
bill.werleysr@wellsfargoadvisors.com

Brad Morgan
Financial Advisor
brad.morgan@wellsfargoadvisors.com

William Werley, Jr.
Financial Advisor
bill.werleyjr@wellsfargoadvisors.com

1313 E. Washington Avenue • Harlingen TX • (956) 428-4146

Investment and Insurance Products: NOT FDIC Insured NO Bank Guarantee MAY Lose Value

Wells Fargo Advisors, LLC, Member SIPC, is a registered broker-dealer and a separate non-bank affiliate of Wells Fargo and Company. ©2009 Wells Fargo Advisors, LLC. All rights reserved. 0312-4952

Linda Seery, the company's landscape designer, said that having a pool is a lifestyle. "It's crazy not to have tropical plants here," said the South Dakota native. "If it dies, plant it again." While the backhoe is digging the pool, she has it dig holes for the largest trees and planting areas. Seery admitted her husband has to drag her indoors at night, away from the mesmerizing pool light show and palm trees.

Hamlin Pools is the region's largest pool company and has built more than 3,500 pools since 1952. It has separate divisions for design, remodel, construction and service. Tyler Stansberry, part of the third generation in

the Hamlin family business, heads the 19-man pool service crew, who go through an eight-week training program. Stansberry said Hamlin services approximately 950 pools and that about 75 percent of Valley pool owners use a service. "People need help with their pools at least in the summer down here," he said. "And some people shut their pools down in the winter, but it's more cost-effective to keep them open."

Myers of Eden said pools are not low maintenance investments, even though maintenance is critical. "One of the things you have to understand is that it's really hard to keep a pool in balance. People are getting in with suntan oil. This is where automation is going: keeping the tolerance tighter." The calcium in local water adds to the standard problems.

When pool equipment breaks at some point, Aquarius Pools is on call to do repairs on pumps, filters and control systems. Headley Osborn noted that saltwater pools add an extra dimension of corrosion to equipment, concrete and stainless steel accessories.

The infinity edge on this pool adds to the resort atmosphere. (Courtesy)



Relaxing by this outdoor oasis is a great way to spend a summer evening. (Courtesy)

Cautionary tales

The established pool companies compete with fly-by-night pool builders. "Customers need to do their due diligence, finding out how long a pool company has been in business, their reputation, if they've built any pools similar to the one you want," Norman said.

Myers actually got into the business when he had a pool remodeled and realized he could do better himself. "One of my big issues is quality control in the industry. Hamlin and one or two others are honest and give you what you pay for. I work only with landscapers that I respect. Yet I like what I do; it's a lot of fun."

One business owner had Hamlin install a pool in 2011 as entertainment for his young adult children. He was impressed that it took only eight weeks start to finish and noted that the pool side hot tub got regular use in the winter. "Hamlin had a good salesman who helped coordinate the river rocks, tile and waterfall." Another rural pool owner solved the problem of sugar cane ash that kept drifting to the white pool bottom: she had the pool remodeled with a green-black composite liner so the ash is not visible.

Myers joked that the best pool is the one your neighbor lets you use. But if you keep thinking about your own backyard paradise, get ready to take the plunge.



An awning keeps this pool's water temperature down in the summer. (Courtesy)



gulf aviation
FULL SERVICE OPERATOR

**The first
Skycatcher
in the Valley.**

1-hour Intro Flight \$60.00

Come experience the new generation of trainers

Enroll today for flight training



(956) 423-7317
5001 Bodenhamer Ave.
Harlingen, TX 78551
www.gulf-aviation.net

Q&A Banking

By Eileen Mattei

Paul Moxley, former President and Director of Texas State Bank and Regional Commercial Executive of BBVA Compass, became the new CEO of Texas Regional Bank on August 1, after 12 months out of the banking industry. A Valley native, Moxley has been in banking since 1970 and was instrumental in overseeing the 2008 integration and conversion of Texas State Bank into BBVA Compass. He talked to VBR's editor about the outlook for banking in the Valley.



is very strong here. Texas State Bank started as a community bank in 1986, and in 20 years it grew into a regional bank with 72 banks across Texas and over \$7 billion in assets. As a community bank, Texas Regional is putting capital back into the community and offering the type of banking our customers need. The directors, officers and employees grew up in the Valley, understand the economy, and they know how to treat customers right. Decisions are made locally. The board of directors and the shareholders (approximately 220) are here in the Valley. Ownership is broad based with no group holding a

controlling interest.

Why did you decide to head up Texas Regional Bank?

I see it as a challenge and a good opportunity to support a young bank as it expands and help the Valley grow. Community banking

Is banking different in the Valley in comparison to other regions?

Border banking is different than other areas of Texas and the U.S. You have to understand and

be familiar with Mexico and its culture. You sometimes find the Valley's development is being limited by the Mexico's economy, such as the peso crisis. Other times, like now, while some areas of the U.S. have economic problems, the Valley has stable growth tempered by the strength of the Mexican economy.

What has changed?

The economic downturn has been felt in every part of the U.S. The real estate market has been affected and that has slowed down sales and investments in the Valley. Community banks and bankers were affected as new regulations trickled down which impacted all banks. What has not changed is the Valley's customer base and the importance of understanding its needs.

Is it going to be easier to get commercial loans?

Lending pressure is based on the economy and regulations. The qualifications of borrowers are more closely scrutinized now. The opening up of lending depends on the economy and the direction it takes. There is no crystal ball for banking.

DALLAS IN 75 MINUTES AND TWICE DAILY

Valley International Airport will offer two non-stop flights to Dallas starting November 4, 2012*

*Service provided by Southwest Airlines



VALLEY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
Freedom & Convenience

FLYTHEVALLEY.COM

Texas Regional Bank is the new kid on the block, opening in 2010. Where is it going to be in five years?

Texas Regional Bank opened in Harlingen last year. Our bank in McAllen will open this fall at North Tenth and Shasta, and we will open a bank in Brownsville in the first quarter of 2013. We plan to expand in the three major areas of the Valley and give back to the community. We hope to have five to seven banks within five years. We are at \$100 million in size now and in five years we anticipate being at \$500 million. This is a great opportunity for our customers, our employees and for our shareholders.

From your point of view, what does the future look like?

For banks and bankers today, the goal is to keep your nose clean, make quality decisions, offer good products and support the needs of your customers. We have good employees providing quality service and that results in satisfied customers. For me personally, it's exciting to be part of something that's fresh and new. This bank was formed during the tough economy in 2008. The timing was perfect, and this bank is headed in the right direction.

Your Own Boss at SpawGlass

By Eileen Mattei

Employee-owned companies are rare. SpawGlass, a general contractor which built the McAllen Convention Center and the University Center at TSTC, is entirely owned by its employees and has a strong Valley presence. Its CEO is Joel Stone, a Valley native and a graduate of TSTC's Building Science Technology program, and the company's South Texas region president is Rene Capistran, based in Harlingen. Statewide the company has approximately 500 employees and three-quarters of them have chosen to become owners, in effect being their own boss.

The construction company, which is responsible for putting up UTB's Biomedical Research Building, the RAHC's Academic and Clinical Research Building, the RAHC's Medical Research Division adjacent to UTPA and the New Horizon Medical Center in Brownsville, was started in 1953 by Rice University graduates, but was later acquired by other firms.

In 1992 the European owner of SpawGlass began divesting its American construction companies, closing down a California operation, according

to Fred Raley, current chairman and former CEO. When the "very willing seller" offered to sell SpawGlass to 10 senior employees, they accepted the opportunity and arranged to buy 51 percent of the construction company. Within 18 months, they purchased the other 49 percent and retired a letter of credit, making the company entirely employee-owned.



SpawGlass, a contractor that is entirely employee-owned, built the University Center at TSTC, the McAllen Convention Center and many other landmarks. (Courtesy)

SAN PEDRO
A p a r t m e n t s
a t S h a r y l a n d P l a n t a t i o n

(956) 580-3030
4206 San Gabriel
Mission, TX 78572
www.MySanPedroApt.com

Raley, one of the original 10 owner-employees, said that over the next seven years the business became stabilized in its new employee-owned structure. The group then decided to open up ownership to another 20 people. "It was working well, and we decided we wanted more owners." The company changed from an S Corp. to a C Corp. and on an annual basis invited more and more employees to participate, eventually including hourly employees as well.

Stock ownership is voluntary, Raley explained. SpawGlass is not an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP), where employees get stock in the company they work for as a benefit. "It is up to the individual employee to opt into the program and decide to buy shares," he said. Each year at the annual spring shareholders meeting, the book value of a share is established, based on cash in the bank versus the number of outstanding shares. The amount of stock has been consistent at under one million shares.

From the CEO to laborers, everyone pays the same price for a share and is issued stock certificates. "Some hourly guys have strong positions, some may have only 10 shares," Raley said. "They all participate in the meeting, and they ask good questions," thanks in part to the company's business literacy training. "We

[practice] open book management. We share financials on a quarterly basis."

Raley happily described talks he has had with employees like one lead carpenter. "He tells you how unit output is doing. He talks about the stock price this year and what the dividend will be."

Becoming part of an employee-owned company is a strong selling point for new hires. "That has to be one of the factors that made SpawGlass really attractive to me," said Laurel Ahsai, who works with SpawGlass in Harlingen. "You are personally vested in making the company successful. It has a lot of to do with your personal achievement and overall happiness. When you come to work to here, you believe your ideas really matter." She noted that in the shareholder forum and every day at work, she feels free to bring up any topic.

The pride of ownership is one reason that SpawGlass's turnover rate has gone way down over the last 10 years. Employees build long-term relationships along with dividends and retirement funds.

"The neat part about this is that the value of the stock is growing," Raley said. Annual revenue now tops \$475 million. "If SpawGlass weren't profitable, the stock price would never increase, and the stock wouldn't be paying the dividends it does." In addition, the ownership

has become broad-based, with only three of the original stockholders still with the company. No one holds more than 13 percent.

SpawGlass helps facilitate stock purchases, offering payroll deductions as an option for employees who want to invest. The company also has a separate 401k with high participation. When an employee leaves, they must sell their shares back to the company which pays the current stock price.



Some of SpawGlass 370 employee owners assemble annually. (Courtesy)



Most colleges are about getting **IN**. We're all about getting

OUT



www.harlingen.tstc.edu

800.852.8784

...and getting hired. **Get in. Get out. Get Hired.**

In the least amount of time, with the least amount owed, and the most gained, TSTC places students in the workforce.

Las Mecates Survives the First Years

By Eileen Mattei

“When you first open a restaurant, no one wants to do business with you because they don’t think you can pay your bills,” said Steve Harrison, owner of Las Mecates restaurant in Brownsville. Harrison reviewed the surprises and struggles peculiar to new restaurant owners at an Accion Texas seminar, disclosing the seldom-discussed facts of life concerning restaurant startups.

About 25 percent of new restaurants close in their first year, and 60 percent close within the first three years. While this rate is, surprisingly, similar to other small businesses, restaurant owners fight the perception that their industry has more failures than others. Like Harrison, they almost all struggled to find good suppliers in their first year.

As an Anglo opening a Mexican restaurant, Harrison did not get a lot of respect, despite his years of business experience as an army officer and plant manager, his experienced partner-chef, Mary Luisa Villanueva and seemingly deep pockets. Prior to opening Las Mecates on Padre Highway near AmFELS, Harrison spent six months checking out other Mexican restau-

rants: their menus, décor, cash registers, credit card machines. During that time, he signed a lease, registered as LLC and got a tax number, got health and building inspection and permits for occupancy and signage, lined up employees and spent upwards of \$30,000 to equip the facility.

“If someone offers free advice, listen to it. Some of it will fit your business and save you a lot of pain,” Harrison said. He valued the advice of Small Business Development Center (SBDC) which offers free information on demographics, traffic counts and similar businesses. “You need a business plan, budget, forecast and deep pockets to start. Otherwise you will be like all the other little restaurants that open and close around us.”

Harrison saw Las Mecates slowly build a customer base, yet at the end of the first year, he had maxed out five credit cards. He didn’t think Las Mecates would survive the long, slow summer without an infusion of cash. Yet he had paid all his various bills and taxes on time. “You can’t afford to lose your credit. Nobody will take mercy on you then,” he said.

So when Harrison told his banker, “I’m in big trouble,” she referred him to Accion Texas, a non-profit small business lender with competitive inter-

est rates. “They do things when we can’t,” the banker said. Harrison submitted a new business plan and numerous forms to Accion, not truly expecting to get a loan. But one week later, he walked out of Accion with the funds that would see Las Mecates through.



A year later, Las Mecates was in better shape, but still threatened by summer doldrums. Harrison got another Accion loan at a lower interest rate. Now in his fourth year, the

est rates. “They do things when we can’t,” the banker said. Harrison submitted a new business plan and numerous forms to Accion, not truly expecting to get a loan. But one week later, he walked out of Accion with the funds that would see Las Mecates through.

A year later, Las Mecates was in better shape, but still threatened by summer doldrums. Harrison got another Accion loan at a lower interest rate. Now in his fourth year, the

**REASON#12
BANKING ON
LOCAL BUSINESS**



A local bank like Border Capital has a huge advantage over the bigger banks because we know the Valley and are closer to the business leaders who keep our communities growing. “Genuine Community Banking”...banking with people you know.

**HUNDREDS OF REASONS
TO BANK WITH
BORDER CAPITAL BANK**

**956-682-2265
BORDERCAPITALBANK.COM**

1912-2012



KREIDLER
Funeral Home, Inc.

Family Owned Since 1912

100 Years of “Thoughtfulness”

The Kreidler Family has served the McAllen area for five generations. Compassion for your family is a tradition in ours.

Please contact us for more information.

Phone: 956-686-0234
314 N 10th St. McAllen, TX 78501
Email: Kreidler@sbcglobal.net
www.kreidlerfuneralhome.com

loans are paid off. "It's easier to make money when you don't need to make payments. Life is better already."

Harrison dispensed his own free advice for wannabe-restaurant owners. "You've got one shot to win a customer. Set your standards high. Take pride in your food. Listen to your customers. Know how much money you are making every day and how much you should be making. Don't go into depression every time you have a bad day or bad hour, yet throughout the day know how much you need to cover expenses."

Harrison said he has a good product, good help and a good location that draw loyal customers from the Port of Brownsville. But the other main ingredient for a successful restaurant is paying attention to industry standards: food costs should range between 25 to 35 percent of cost of food. "Portion controls are essential." For Harrison, so much boils down to cost-benefit analysis: what is this action going to cost me? How many tacos have to be sold to earn \$500? He has also put in safeguards, such as an audit trail of cash receipts, and repeated the importance of having a good bookkeeper.

"You need good qualified help, but they are already working someplace else when you start up," Harrison said. "Now people come to me and want to work, because I pay on time and take care of my employees. When the economy takes off, it will get a lot more fun for everybody," said Harrison. With 10 employees now, he plans to hire two more in the fall. After his first year, he connected with trustworthy suppliers, like Rio Farms. The restaurant now does catering which he sees as a value-added component. "It adds to the bottom line real fast. It also helps bring people to the restaurant."

Harrison said becoming knowledgeable about the restaurant business has let him enjoy his work. "I'm much more comfortable now. I eat good every day. Nobody loves your business like you do."

HAPPY NEW BERT OGDEN CUSTOMERS OF THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY YOUR LUXURY CAR DEALER



DALIA ARCE, EDINBURG
WITH SALES ASSOCIATE HECTOR CANTU



SABRINA GONZALEZ, MISSION
WITH SALES ASSOCIATE HECTOR CANTU



**MR. JOSE SAENZ,
WITH WIFE YOLANDA RESENDEZ,
GRANDCHILDREN ARTURO &
XAVIER GARZA, EDINBURG**
WITH SALES ASSOCIATE RUBEN LOPEZ



DIANA DE DIOS, MCALEN
WITH SALES ASSOCIATE MARIO CANTU



MR. & MRS. MARTINEZ, LAREDO
WITH SALES ASSOCIATE BILLY DE ANGELO



See your company
advertised here.

We've got space
for all budgets.

Beth Walters
Upper Valley
sales@valleybusinessreport.com

Todd Breland
Mid & Lower Valley



INFINITI
MISSION
583-0000



BMW
McALLEN
686-6666



VOLVO
EDINBURG
287-9999



CADILLAC
MISSION
581-4444



BUICK
EDINBURG
381-4444

www.bertogden.com

Tires – The Second Time Around

By Lori Vermaas

Marta Martinez has spent much of her professional life thinking of ways to help the environment: organizing curbside recycling services and transforming plastic bags into brooms and Styrofoam products into compact disc cases. Founder of ESD Recycling, located in Olmito, Martinez said, “I’m an ecologist. I’ve been doing this for twenty-seven years. My life is recycling. I can turn a solid into liquid or pellets, or I can change the physical components of Styrofoam to liquid. I’m not looking for medals or diplomas.”

Her latest reclamation project, however, deserves some kind of official recognition: a reported \$4.5 million state-of-the-art tire recycling facility, Tire Recycling and Processing (TRP), whose use of the latest green technology is unmatched in Texas. Indeed, the 42,777-square-foot enterprise, which shreds tires into crumb rubber, fiber and powder, and extracts steel wires from the remains, provides such unique services that Martinez, the company’s vice president, has attracted serious inquiries from officials in Dallas, San Antonio and Mexico.

The facility, located in an industrial

park off Grimes Road in Harlingen, can process ten tons of tires at once, at a pace of seven seconds per standard-sized passenger tire. The production goal is to process from 5,000 to 8,000 tires each day. Large mesh bags, around four-feet tall and brimming with pulverized tires, line the storage floor.

“Look at this,” Martinez said, pointing at a bag full of fiber, weighing 83 pounds. Tire fiber resembles dirty cotton balls, or steel wool. “It may only be fiber, but gathered together, it weighs a lot more than people expect.” Along with grinding up the tires, the plant will convert the solids into biofuel (diesel fuel named d2) via a process called pyrolysis, which takes between 8 to 12 hours. Martinez is quite proud of this production aspect, especially since the d2 will also fuel TRP’s engines. Ideally, she would like the facility to produce 100% biofuel for resale to refineries, but will adjust that, depending on the contracts her company makes with other end users. Crumb rubber, for instance, is often used in playground cover or sports surfaces (making them much more forgiving on joints) and roads.

Texas possesses an especially rich market for tire recyclers. Texans have crammed landfills along the border with tires to such a degree that during the early

It takes large equipment to turn tons of tires into reusable crumbs. (VBR)



2000s the Environmental Protection Agency inventoried the scrap tire population of the entire U.S.-Mexico border region. According to the 2007 report, one Brownsville landfill alone contained around 1,000,000 tires, with one of Matamoros’ at 600,000. Updating the study, Martinez stated that the number in Matamoros is “closer to three million” now.

Martinez is well aware of the latest statistics, given that she seriously studied tire-recycling methods before embarking on TRP’s creation. Stymied by the realization that Texas

How To Improve Your Bottom Line *without saying a word*



Your Kind of Bank. Your Kind of Banker.



956.631.7890 www.riobk.com



Member FDIC.

generates 32 million tires per year, and wondering why and what happens to them all, she spent ten years gathering and evaluating such research. She discovered that the United States primarily relies on shredding tires and then burying the output into landfills. Unimpressed she investigated further and found that the conversion technology TRP now uses had long been standard in Europe, Asia, China and Taiwan. With the help of representatives from overseas companies, Martinez was able to purchase the technology whose parts include belt conveyors, huge turbines and thermal reactors, the last which enables pyrolysis.

TRP began operation in late June, so the company currently has only first-shift employees. But Martinez predicted the need for a second and third shifts, particularly since Hidalgo, San Benito, Rio Hondo and Laredo will soon be using TRP's services, which also include scheduling tire pick-ups. "Right now, the projection is from 11 to 30 jobs," including forklift operators, shipping and receiving representatives, supervisors and data entry. In TRP's first week of operation, the plant received about 400 tires from individuals (\$1/passenger tire, \$3/trailer tire), but "we're expecting [tires from businesses and cities] any time. They are ready, but we are preparing the scale. Everything has to be on the scal; it has to be manifest. We are in the beginning of initiating the operation." In fact, most of the scrap tires the facility plans to process will come from large entities, like car agencies, cities and landfill owners.

TRP is the expression of Martinez's belief that human beings have an obligation to make the world a better place. Since environmental degradation increasingly plagues the planet, "everybody has to . . . do something," she said, placing a beaker containing d2 on her desk. "It's our responsibility. How can I help to avoid global warming, natural disasters? Each individual has to ask, how can I help?" For Martinez, the answer lies in transforming scrap tires and attitudes, one at a time.



Marta Martinez is surrounded by bags of tire crumbs which can be made into paving materials or playground surfacing. (VBR)

Why do you buy Insurance?

Trusted Choice

SHEPARD WALTON KING

INSURANCE GROUP

Business • Personal • Benefits

1906B East Tyler / Harlingen, TX 78550 121 West Pecan Blvd. / McAllen, TX 78501

956-423-8755 **956-682-2841**

www.shepardwaltonking.com

Raw Data and Vital Statistics

By Eileen Mattei

Earlier this year, Dr. Marie T. Mora, professor of economics at The University of Texas-Pan American, was in Washington, D.C., sitting across from Federal Reserve System Chairman Ben Bernanke. Dr. Mora, a labor economist, discussed entrepreneurship, pointing out that the border has higher self-employment rates than the rest of Texas or the nation.



In January, Mora began a three year term on the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Data Users Advisory Committee (DUAC). The BLS operates more than 24 surveys and programs that measure employment and unemployment, compensation, worker safety, productivity and producer price movement as well as data used to estimate prices and inflation. DUAC assess-

es the priorities of BLS data users, suggests new programs and changes in existing programs, and recommends terminating obsolete ones. The 19 DUAC members, with Mora as the only Texan, are recognized experts in their fields of economics, business, labor analysis and public policy.

Many federal policies are based on the numbers released by the BLS, Mora said. "Data collected by the BLS are extremely important, not just in terms of labor policy, but also for fiscal and monetary policies in general. I feel it is very important to hear from people from diverse backgrounds and from communities who use these datasets, but are often overlooked at the national level."

Mora, who herself frequently uses BLS data in her work, discussed the first DUAC meeting in

which she participated. When she received the first agenda, which dealt with particular data sets, Mora volunteered to take on one of the topics: employment measures related to the age of the company. "I found that important because new job creation is primarily in new companies."

Mora has researched the growing number of Hispanic immigrant women who have launched microenterprises. "They add up," she said, of the new businesses that employ between one and ten persons. "Hispanics are creating employment opportunities for themselves. This suggests that recent labor market figures would have looked much worse without their entrepreneurial tendencies."

Overall DUAC members looked at the data that BLS collects and noted if there are some variables collected but not dispersed, Mora explained. "One of the questions is, 'Would this be of interest if publically available?'" Much BLS data is released online, although some data sets are only available on CDs. The public can select different variables to download and can also request BLS to compile various statistics from existing data.

Alamo
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Known as "the Refuge to the Valley", the City of Alamo is a GREAT place to shop, live, play and establish your business. We encourage you to visit our growing city and experience the sights, sounds, tastes and hospitality we have to offer.

Alamo
playful city
usa

2011 & 2012

USDA
Rural Development Revolving Loan Fund Program established to Promote Economic Development in the City of Alamo.

Contact AEDC for more information.

Save a lot of cash!
Join the Association
That makes a lot of sense

TMA-RGV

TEXAS MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION
A Division of Texas HUG, 501(c)3 Non-Profit
Serving the RGV since 1977

One of our Business Development Consultants can provide you with professional assistance, using **TMA-RGV** resources, to achieve your objectives.

WE FOCUS ON IMPROVING YOUR BOTTOM LINE

It all starts with a Confidential Business Analysis to determine the areas where you can save both time and money. Then the help Begins.

**WE LISTEN,
WE UNDERSTAND,
WE RESPOND.**

**CALL FOR YOUR NO-COST CONSULTATION
PHONE 956.399.1181**

Mora, interested in data on race and ethnicity, is participating in a pilot project examining ethnicity or culture and days away from work. She is also interested in tracking how long people are without a job when they want one.

Given the weight attached to BLS data, Mora emphasized that the Labor Department is very cautious about the implications of some surveys. "They will say this may not be representative of the whole." She noted that having more specific geographic areas is useful but not representative, because the data applies to a particular region and shouldn't be extrapolated.

Wherever she goes, the economist admitted that she likes to talk about UTPA and how interesting the border area is. "People outside of this area don't realize how close the ties are with Mexico," that the economies are interdependent. "A lot of national policies and programs are being shaped that affect Hispanic and border communities without hearing from people who actually live in them," Mora said. "I hope that UTPA becomes the university that automatically comes to the minds of policymakers and others who are interested in learning more about the U.S. border economy and other socioeconomic issues in the border region."

DUAC gives advice on innovations in data collection, dissemination and presentation, suggesting new ways to administer surveys and give access to data in the age of technology.

Mora, who is an active member and past president of the American Society of Hispanic Economists, came to UTPA in 2002. She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in economics from the University of New Mexico and her Ph.D. in economics from Texas A&M University. In recent years, she has seen more UTPA students interested in studying economics, possibly because the economy has become such a volatile subject.

PREMIUM AUTOMOTIVE SERVICES LAND ROVER / VOLVO / JAGUAR SERVICE, REPAIR & DIAGNOSTICS

Dealer Equivalent Services,
Repairs & Computer Diagnostics

Factory Trained Master Certified Land Rover,
Volvo & Jaguar Technician Support

24 Month / 24,000 Mile Warranty

24 Hour Valley Wide
Wrecker Service
956.577.1238



956.287.0900

122 N. McColl Rd at Hwy. 107 Edinburg, TX preautosvc@yahoo.com

Premium Automotive Services is an independent business specializing in the service and repair of Land Rovers, Volvos, and Jaguars. We are not an authorized Land Rover/Volvo/Jaguar dealership, we do not sell new Land Rovers/Volvos/Jaguars, and we're not otherwise affiliated with, originating from, sponsored by, or approved by Land Rover/Volvo/Jaguar in any way.

WE'VE GOT IT! CONVENIENCE

OPEN LATE

OPEN SUNDAY

OPEN 24/7
ONLINE BANKING

ibc.com

FDIC MEMBER FDIC/INTERNATIONAL BANCESHARES CORPORATION

 **IBC BANK**

DILIGEN

TECHNOLOGIES GROUP

TAKING CARE OF IT

**We are the one stop shop
for your technology needs!**

Reliable High Speed Internet (T1/DS1)
Fully Managed Onsite/Remote Technology Support
24/7 Network Monitoring
Managed Virus Protection
Data Backup and Recovery
HIPAA Certified
Technology Consulting

Call to Order Now!



956.631.4622

WWW.DILIGEN.COM

INFO@DILIGEN.COM

200 SOUTH 10TH STREET, SUITE 500 McALLEN, TX

Alhambra at the Crossroads

By Eileen Mattei

Juan Carlos Zapata, proprietor of Alhambra, closed the popular, innovative 17th Street restaurant, bar and hookah lounge in April after a three-year run. “We decided it was time to transition,” Zapata explained. “The original concept was a crossroads of culture. Now it’s playing out in different ways.”



Chef James Canter and proprietor Juan Carlos Zapata have taken Alhambra in a new direction. (VBR)

Zapata, along with executive chef James Canter, are already deep in the evolutionary process that is moving Alhambra from its identity as Spanish/Mediterranean-themed nightspot with exceptional cuisine. “We have redefined ourselves, diversified,” he said. The centerpiece remains fresh food, both at the McAllen Farmers Market, held Saturday mornings on the Alhambra’s patio, and in the special event catering business which is taking flight.

“We had a lot of irons in the fire, but after closing the doors, things have gone very well,” Zapata said. The two men behind Alhambra are following other, equally satisfying paths and are making progress on projects they had scant time for earlier, such as organic farms, cooking classes and customized catering menus. They are visibly relieved to be out of a business where they closed at 2 a.m. and left for home at 4 a.m. “That’s over with and that’s nice,” Zapata said. The fact that the entertainment district’s

Vendors and customers relax on Alhambra’s patio during the farmer’s market. (Courtesy)



business climate had shifted in a way that didn’t gibe with their philosophy also encouraged the transition.

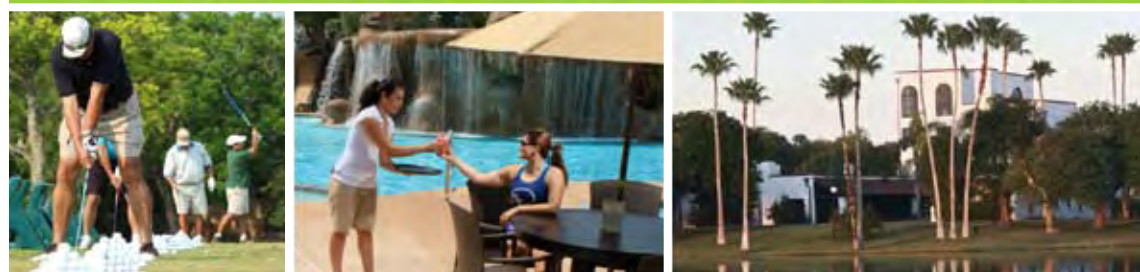
“I always wondered how the knowledge we’ve gained could be used. Somehow it’s all paying off,” Canter said. He came to the Valley knowing it was major agricultural area. What shocked him was discovering the production was on the commodity level, with only a few hard-to-find farmers selling premium vegetables, exotic fruits and the organic produce cherished by chefs. On the Chefs’ Tour of Farms, organized by the Texas Department of Agriculture, Canter was introduced to the Valley’s small farmers and began buying from them. He championed the McAllen Farmers Market. Farmers shaded by Alhambra’s cabanas brought their just-picked lettuce and peppers and other fresh, flavorful vegetables, fruits and meats to the urban population.

The Saturday market is now the only time that the Alhambra is open to the public. Customers can enjoy a light brunch or cocktails after shopping for fresh eggs and lemon grass. Zapata sees the farmers market as a wholesome beacon in downtown, a family friendly event that is different from anything else in the entertainment district. For Canter, the market is part of a commitment to educate people on the tastes of locally grown foods. “As people got accustomed to purchasing from the farmers, they saw it was better for them.” He said that increased revenue, encouraged other businesses and farmers markets, and started health initiatives.

Alhambra has become a food grower, too. It has taken on an orchard with five types of citrus, figs, and avocados plus four acres for produce. But they continue to look for farm-



Taking Corporate Events To New Levels



- 50 Villa Suites
- 2 Championship Golf Courses
- Swimming & Tennis
- Fitness Center
- Casual & Fine Dining
- Groups, Meetings & Event Facilities



1 Rancho Viejo Drive
Rancho Viejo, TX 78575
(956) 350-4000
(800) 531 7400
www.rvrcc.com

ers.

Zapata said the Alhambra operates as an event center with outstanding catering. Canter, with his long experience in the food business, was aware that catered food is not usually the high point of a special event and intends to change that perception.

"It's always been my goal to make catering food of fine and high quality. Often it loses so much in translation," Canter said. While he has a catering menu, clients often ask him to give them something uncommon such as Lebanese, Moroccan, or Hawaiian. Catering involves written contracts, the logistics of ingredient sourcing, preparation and serving, and, like restaurants, long hours. "The great thing about catering is you have a sold menu. You know how many are coming in. It takes the guess work out of the restaurant business. Our staff has been very loyal and flexible."

Canter considers cooking classes at Alhambra as part of the territory and welcomes the diversity of requests he fields to teach different cuisines. So far he has offered classes in gluten-free, Moroccan, Spanish and Korean 101. "We bill ourselves as the anti-restaurant now," he said jokingly.

Alhambra, the event center, has been used for art exhibits, wedding receptions and a jazz lounge. "This is becoming a lot more than we expected it to be," Zapata said. The duo was hired to organize and operate the Farmers Market at Weslaco held Thursday evenings at 'Parrot Park' at the intersection of Business 83 and Texas Blvd.

"This has been a labor of love," said Canter, adding that the support of the Zapata family has been essential in bringing fresh local food to the community. "This reorganization of identity that Alhambra is going through is going to work out for the best. Its heyday is yet to come. I treat it like it's my own."



Garcia Farms brings its fresh produce to Alhambra's farmers market each Saturday. (Courtesy)

A Casual Waterfront Restaurant Famous for the FUN, Known for the FOOD!



Lunch Specials Monday-Friday 11AM - 3PM
Outdoor Cannon Bar
Karaoke with DJ Jeffery Fri & Sat

956.943.FOOD (3663)

www.PiratesLandingRestaurant.com

Located at the food of the Causeway in Port Isabel's Historic Lighthouse Square

Like us on Facebook



BEST SEAFOOD AND PLACE TO WATCH FIREWORKS.

A Real Dining Over the Water Experience



PIER 19

RESTAURANT & BAR

Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Jazz Breakfast Sunday 9AM - 1PM
Daily Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner Specials!
Saturday Night Fireworks on the Pier 9:15PM
Palapa Bar Sunset Live Entertainment Fri & Sat

956.761.PIER (7437)

www.Pier19.us

1 Padre Blvd., South Padre Island
From Causeway, Turn right on Padre Blvd.
You'll see our sign one block on the right



Like us on Facebook

Getting a Valid Contract

By Manuel Pruneda

In the last article, which is part of the series "Top Ten Ways to Prevent a Lawsuit," we learned about option number seven: how establishing proper documentation practices might help a business avoid a situation that could lead to a lawsuit.

Here's a scenario: Casa Gratis was a small, one-man owned residential construction company. Casa Gratis represented to prospective homebuyers that it built homes according to the homeowner's dreams and wishes, within a timely manner, and within their budget.

One day, Casa Gratis' heating and cooling (HVAC) subcontractor walked out of a new home construction job and took all of the material and equipment with him just shortly before completion of the new home. Casa Gratis signed a one-page agreement with the subcontractor for services and materials that included an itemized service and price schedule. The agreement did not mention anything about termination of services, disputes, and nothing was written about deadlines. There also was no penalty for leaving a project incomplete.

Casa Gratis tried to serve the subcon-

tractor with a written legal notice, but the subcontractor's address that was written on the agreement did not exist. Unfortunately for Casa Gratis, the construction agreement with the homebuyer and bank credit line had a final completion date that was around the corner. Casa Gratis tried frantically to call another HVAC service provider, but no company wanted to consider the job because it required that they examine the other subcontractor's work from top to bottom. It was just too tedious and complicated. The only ones that would consider the job wanted to re-do the entire home their way. Casa Gratis was forced to hire a new subcontractor at full price.

Contracts are supposed to be iron clad, but if they are not properly written, they can leave you in a world of hurt. Small business owners and sole-proprietors tend to simply write down what they think is fair without including legal protections that could save time and money in the long run. While it might be imprudent to convince yourself that everyone is out to take advantage of you, the best way to avoid any misunderstandings is to have a professional create your business contracts and protect you and your business interests.

A contract is a formal agreement between multiple people or business entities. For a contract

to be valid, certain elements must be in place. There has to be mutual agreement between all contracting parties. This means that all parties understand what the agreement is, how much is to be paid, the term of the agreement, and other important details that should or could happen. Details that are not included within the written instrument are likely unenforceable. However, not all contracts are required to be written. Although some laws require a written agreement such as one that relates to real property, a mutual verbal agreement may be enforceable.

There must be an offer and acceptance to create a valid agreement. If the party is not interested in what you have to offer and does not accept it, a contract does not exist. There also must be mutual consideration for a contract to be valid. Something of value must be exchanged for a service that is performed or for a product



Continuing Education Courses

Upgrade your skills & Learn something new.

Computer Literacy **\$150 • 1.6 CEUs**
This course will introduce students to the basic operations of a computer. Book may be required.
T/Th • 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
ITSC 1012.20AA • 9/4/12 - 9/27/12

Microsoft Outlook **\$150 • 1.6 CEUs**
This course will cover an introduction to navigating through Microsoft Outlook. Book may be required.
M/W • 5:30 p.m. - 8:15 p.m.
ITSW 1030.20AA • 9/10/12 - 9/26/12

Food Manager Certification **\$100 • 1.6 CEUs**
This course is a certification program for owners and operators of establishments.
S/Su • 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
RSTO 1041.20AA • 9/8/12 - 9/9/12
RSTO 1041.20AB • 10/13/12 - 10/14/12

Basic Motorcycle Course **\$195 • 2.0 CEUs**
This weekend course is for beginning motorcycle riders.
F • 6 p.m. - 10 p.m. & S/Su • 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
XMISC 1001.20AA • 9/7/12 - 9/9/12
XMISC 1001.20AB • 9/21/12 - 9/23/12
XMISC 1001.20AI • 10/5/12 - 10/7/12

CPR/First Aid **\$85 • 0.8 CEUs**
This course covers lifesaving skills of respiratory (choking and near-drowning) and cardiac emergencies.
F • 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
EMSP 1026.20AA • 9/21/12
EMSP 1026.20AB • 10/19/12

Forklift Operator Certification **\$150 • 0.8 CEUs**
Information and training for forklift operators.
S • 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.
CNSE 1003.20AA • 9/15/12
CNSE 1003.20AB • 10/13/12

Portable Fire Extinguisher **\$50 • 0.2 CEUs**
Information and training for operating a portable fire extinguisher.
S • 8 a.m. - 10 a.m.
TFPTA 1016.20AA • 9/15/12
TFPTA 1016.20AB • 10/13/12

OSHA 10 Construction **\$150 • 1.4 CEUs**
Information and training for OSHA 10 Construction.
S • 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.
TOSHT 1007.20AA • 9/22/12 - 9/29/12
TOSHT 1007.20AB • 10/6/12 - 10/20/12

Facebook, Twitter & Skype: Getting Started **\$45 • 0.8 CEUs**
S • 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
TITNW 1037.20AA • 10/6/12 - 10/13/12

Intro to Social Media: YouTube **\$30 • 0.2 CEUs**
M • 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
TIMED 1401.20AA • 10/29/12



TSTC
Corporate & Community Education

1902 N. Loop 499 • 956.364.4606
www.harlingen.tstc.edu/corporate

Equal opportunity shall be afforded within the Texas State Technical College System to all employees and applicants for admission or employment regardless of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age or disability. TSTC will make reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities.

that is bought.

Contracts are often times challenged in Court. Some reasons relate to bad faith during negotiations, fraud, and other legal exceptions the laws may prohibit. Business contracts can result in unnecessary headaches and legal drama. Conduct prohibited by an agreement or not mentioned within a document can jeopardize business interests and present unforeseen and expensive legal challenges. Great business contracts follow the age-old adage - if something bad can happen, it will happen. Preparing for every contingency could save you time and money in litigation and business reputation.

A well thought out and drafted agreement may take time and money, but the advice, experience and recommendations from an attorney that can spot and address loopholes can save your business. While it may seem cost effective to draft your own contracts, your business may not be in a position to afford such a costly mistake.

If you have questions creating contracts, or if you need counsel regarding an existing contract, contact Michael Pruneda from The Pruneda Law Firm at 956-702-9675, or via web at: www.the-mcallenbusinesslawyer.com or www.michael-pruneda.com.

DAVIS EQUITY REALTY

LOCATION! LOCATION! LOCATION!



Trenton Town Center
*Located at North West corner of
Trenton and McColl Road*

- Wal-Mart anchored center
- 1,200-10,000 SF available
- 208,000 Population within 5 Miles
- 64,000 Households within 5 Miles
- Avg Household Income \$51,600
- Excellent Retail Location
*Jewelry, Shoes, Insurance, Print/Copy,
Medical Services, Professional Offices,
and More.*

CALL TODAY FOR MORE INFO!

2290 W. Pike Blvd. Suite 100 - Weslaco, Texas 78596
info@davisequity.com www.DavisEquity.com

(956) 969-8648



It's a Matter of When and Where, Not If!

Let's help **BEFORE**
a devastating hurricane hits.

Mid Valley Collection Point: Weslaco Chamber of Commerce & Weslaco EDC
Still Need: Upper & Lower Valley Collection Points & Trucking Company

What is PSR?

It's Valley Business Report's proactive initiative of collecting and distributing necessary supplies to a storm-stricken Gulf Coast area just after the hurricane passes. From Texas to Florida, let's be prepared for the inevitable.

For more info about
how you can help contact us
PSR@ValleyBusinessReport.com



Cruising Forward

By Nydia O. Tapia-Gonzales

Osprey Cruises began its Texas journey in Port Aransas in 1971 as a deep-sea fishing tour business and relocated to South Padre Island in 1995 where they are currently cementing a steadfast maritime legacy. “We moved to South Padre Island because we saw the Val-

ley had plenty of opportunities that were not being taken advantage of,” said General Manager Phil Calo. With two partners, he started with one deep-sea fishing boat and soon after added a second one. Two years later, they introduced their first bay fishing cruise, and the best was yet to come.

Bryan Owen—Osprey’s multifaceted hospitality manager, promotions director and boat captain —believes the company’s variety of services and amiable dispositions are what keep clients satisfied. “We have the best boats and top-notch captains who have been here for a long time,” he said. Their fleet of six US Coast Guard certified vessels is equipped with the latest in navigation technology, and their captains are not only experienced but popular with clients.

Owen said the company has a loyal local base especially from the upper Rio Grande Valley. Winter Tex-

ans keep them busy during the winter, while the summer draws thousands of visitors from all over the state. Even Europeans embark on their cruises once in a while.

The demand for themed cruises motivated the partners to launch the Black Dragon pirate ship, an authentic recreation of a 17th century Spanish galleon. The adventure cruises have been as successful as expected, but it is the increasing in popularity bay fishing, that persuaded the company to introduce a second bay fishing boat. Bay fishing cruises now depart from two convenient locations: Pirate’s Landing restaurant in Port Isabel and Pier 19 restaurant on South Padre Island.

There was passion in Calo’s voice when he described the company’s new Sea Life Safari cruises and its guaranteed dolphin sightings. He explained that boat captains take tour participants further into the dolphin’s favorite areas. In addition, a net is pulled behind the boat to catch different species of sea life. Shrimp, fish and other creatures are taken on board temporarily for an amusing, hands-on, educational presentation about the marine life of the Gulf of Mexico and the Laguna Madre.



Osprey Cruises features dolphin watches, bay fishing cruises, sea life safari cruises and more on its fleet of six different vessels. (VBR)

LUXURY BEACHFRONT RENTALS
CONDOMINIUMS AND HOUSES
Fantastic views by the day - week - month

FRANKE RENTALS
 1-800-447-4753
 956-761-2606
 8605 Padre Blvd.
 South Padre Island, TX 78597
www.frankerealtors.com

- Centrally located, walking distance to the beach, bay, restaurants and shopping
- Tropically landscaped pool and Jacuzzi
- Complimentary Hot Breakfast daily
- Complimentary WiFi throughout the entire property
- Evening movie showing at the pool (seasonal) - popcorn, ice cream, and snacks available
- Meeting facilities
- Guest laundry facilities
- All rooms contain microwave, refrigerator, wet bar, in-room safe and private balcony in addition to standard amenities
- Great Vacation Packages

The Inn
 AT SOUTH PADRE

1709 Padre Boulevard,
 South Padre Island, TX 78597
 956-761-5658
www.theinnsouthpadre.com

Captain Everado Garcia and one of Osprey's boats.
(VBR)



Not all of Osprey's bay cruises are easy and relaxing experiences, for Osprey Cruises offers an exciting action-packed cruise aboard the Thriller. This boat is a high speed 55-foot off-shore racer powered by twin 600 horse power turbo engines reaching speeds of up to 55 miles per hour. Thriller is the only passenger-carrying vessel operating in Texas waters certified by the US Coast Guard to operate at high speeds.

Osprey Cruises shares its waterfront home on the Laguna Madre with Pier 19 restaurant. In the restaurant's lobby, the Osprey's gift shop is fully stocked with unique jewelry, pirate-themed merchandise and souvenirs. According to Calo, the companies have a wonderful business relationship and a great partnership. He pointed out that passengers returning from a fishing cruise are able to savor their catch as soon as they get off the boat. "It doesn't get fresher than that," said Calo, "people catch the fish, we clean it, cook it, serve it, and we even wash the dishes." Some people opt for dining before or after their cruise at Pier 19.

Because of the partnership, package deals, which include a meal at Pier 19 plus a cruise of choice, are available to winter visitors. Both Calo and Owen visit over 200 RV parks across the Rio Grande Valley every year promoting Osprey Cruises and Pier 19 restaurant. Catered parties on board a private cruise are also offered.

August brings the Texas International Fishing Tournament to South Padre Island and with it come hundreds of people. Calo welcomes every event. "Sand Castle Days, Bike Fest, fishing tournaments - all traffic impacts our business."

While event traffic certainly impacts their business, it is the company's professionalism and dedication, along with its comprehensive range of outdoor activities that keep people coming back for more. "Coming to South Padre was a very good decision," Calo said.

2012

Baseball

SCHEDULE



H=HOME
A=AWAY

SUN.	MON.	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRI.	SAT.
			A 1 THRILLER THUNDER	A 2 THRILLER THUNDER	H 3 THRILLER THUNDER	H 4 THRILLER THUNDER
A 5 THRILLER THUNDER	A 6 THRILLER THUNDER	A 7 THRILLER THUNDER	A 8 THRILLER THUNDER	H 9 SAN ANGELO COLTS	H 10 SAN ANGELO COLTS	H 11 SAN ANGELO COLTS
H 12 SAN ANGELO COLTS	13	H 14 THRILLER THUNDER	H 15 THRILLER THUNDER	H 16 THRILLER THUNDER	H 17 THRILLER THUNDER	A 18 COLTS
A 19 COLTS	A 20 COLTS	A 21 COLTS	22	A 23 SAN ANGELO COLTS	A 24 SAN ANGELO COLTS	A 25 SAN ANGELO COLTS
A 26 COLTS	H 27 THRILLER THUNDER	H 28 THRILLER THUNDER	H 29 THRILLER THUNDER	H 30 THRILLER THUNDER	H 31 COLTS	

AUGUST

SUN.	MON.	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRI.	SAT.
						H 1 COLTS
H 2 COLTS	H 3 COLTS	4	5	6	7	8

SEPT.

H=HOME
A=AWAY



For Tickets Call
(956) 423-9464

www.whitewingsbaseball.net

Un-Social Media Policies

By Susan LeMiles Holmes

When employers and employees first started experiencing the dicey effects of social media on the workplace, I thought that most of the potential legal difficulties would come under Equal Employment Law categories regarding hiring discrimination and termination actions or, perhaps, company policies that violated first amendment rights.

But a program delivered to the Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM) by Eddie Sikes, a partner at the law firm of Royston Rayzor in Brownsville, demonstrated that there is another entity very interested in the future of social media policy interpretation, legislation and judicial proceedings.

The National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) regulates collective bargaining and protects certain employee activity as well as communication with regards to the exercise of employee rights. After several companies' social media policies came up in cases before the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), groups of employers started asking them, "Well, what is a good social media policy?"

In an attempt to answer this question,

the NLRB issued a memo in January about its analysis and interpretation of lawful and unlawful social media policies from actual cases that have come before them. Nancy Cleeland, an NLRB spokesperson, said, "Social media, just by its nature, is a collective activity, and that goes to the heart of our law. It makes sense that we would pick this up."

Company policies that were deemed to violate the NLRA include some big names. General Motors' policy actually forbids employees to post anything potentially "misleading" and included a warning of "disciplinary action" if workers disobeyed guidelines. General Motors' policy contained the statement, "Think carefully about 'friending' co-workers on external social media sites. Communications with co-workers on such sites that would be inappropriate in the workplace are also inappropriate online, and what you say in your personal social media channels could become a concern in the workplace."

According to GM's policy, "If you engage in discussion related to [GM], in addition to disclosing that you work for [GM] and that your views are personal, you must also be sure that your posts are completely accurate and not misleading and that they do not reveal non-public company information on any public site."

At DISH Network, social media policy prohibited "disparaging or defamatory comments about the company, its employees, officers, directors, vendors, customers, partners, affiliates, or our, or their, products/services." Another part of the DISH policy prohibited talking with reporters or bloggers without company authorization.

Target's policy fell short in the eyes of the NLRB with the statement telling employees that they could not "release confidential guest, team member or company information" via social networks.

The NLRB interpreted all of these policy errors as "overly broad" and that the restrictions could potentially interfere with lawful criticism of working conditions and labor practices as well as the employee's own conditions of employment including information about wages and safety. The NLRB also said that it hopes the publication of the memo will assist companies in avoiding legal entanglements.

Not every company was criticized by the NLRB. One company whose guidelines were interpreted as being completely lawful was held up as a model for all others. Giant

The **WESLACO ADVANTAGE**

**BUSINESS CENTERED
IN THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY**

www.weslacoedc.com

EDC
WESLACO

John Knox Village



*Independent living
with a Carefree lifestyle
at an Affordable price.*

(956) 968-4575
1300 S Border
Weslaco, TX 78596
www.johnknoxvillagergv.com



retailer Wal-Mart simply prohibits "inappropriate postings that may include discriminatory remarks, harassment, and threats of violence or similar inappropriate or unlawful conduct."

Most companies are trying to walk the razor's edge between requiring employees to be professional, discrete and respectful when posting, and stepping on their legal rights to make comments about the workplace.

My advice? Tell your employees to be respectful in all communication and your management to be prepared for the reality that social media policies, just like equal employment opportunity policies and disability policies, will continually be tested against existing and new legislation....it's the American way.

Special note: Both Illinois and Maryland have already passed laws making it illegal for employers to require that employees and prospective employees give them their social media passwords. Similar bills have been introduced in the U.S. House and U.S. Senate.

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.

Chamber Women's Conference 2012

Determined, Destined, Chosen

For more information call
956.433.3060
or find
Chamber Women's Conference
on Facebook.

August 24 & 25, 2012
SPI Convention Center

Life Changing Speakers
Empowering Breakout Sessions
Networking Opportunities
And Much More

SIA
SHEPARD
INSURANCE AGENCY

LET US BE
YOUR TRUSTED
CHOICE FOR
BUSINESS
OR PERSONAL
INSURANCE!



5801 N 10th, Ste. 300
McAllen, TX 78502

686-3888

2600 E. Griffin Pkwy.
Mission, TX 78572

432-0888

www.shepkins.com



5601 Padre Blvd.
South Padre Island
(956) 761-7700

www.casabellaspi.com

Americas
Best Value Inn
& Suites
Casa Bella Hotel

KBW Stays Behind the Scenes

By Eileen Mattei

Chance and the ability to recognize an opportunity have started many a business. While in the RGV after flying a friend to the border in 1974, Gary Kinney went to check out a potential customer for the duck compost distributed by his Wisconsin nursery. Instead, a short time later, enticed by the palm trees and the business potential, Kinney bought the Alamo company and renamed it Kinney Bonded Warehouse. Within three years, the entrepreneurial Kinney had phased out the bonded warehouse side and moved solidly into horticultural supply.

Today under the name of KBW Supply, the Kinney family is a wholesale distributor of everything horticultural that a Texas professional greenhouse, nursery or landscaping supplier would need. That includes custom-built greenhouses, bamboo stakes and ventilation systems to irrigation pipes, professional soil (which contains no dirt) and plant containers as large as 300 gallons. General manager Todd Kinney represents the second generation along with his brother Chad, a regional sales manager. Gary Kinney remains active in the

company that he relocated to Donna in 1976, and, third-generation Austin Kinney, 16, has a summer job there.

While walking around the business's large warehouse and storage yards stocked with pallets of peat moss and rubber mulch, Todd Kinney explained that the majority of KBW's customers are outside the Valley. They are primarily professional growers who themselves sell to retailers-local garden stores.

Kinney majored in business rather than horticulture at Texas A&M because the business is about "process flow, efficiency, and the nuts and bolts of product in and product out," delivered on time to the customer. He officially joined the family business in 1989, having worked his way up from sweeping floors as a kid, and as a teenager loading company trucks and cleaning the injection molding machine that made plastic plant pots.

To a remarkable degree, KBW is based on family-to-family relationships. The greenhouses and nurseries they supply are also family-run, small to mid-sized business-

Todd Kinney uses his business skills to keep nurseries and greenhouses supplied with horticultural tools such as professional soil and vermiculite. (VBR)



es. The children and grandchildren of KBW's original customers are now running those nurs-

Texas National Bank
EST. 1929

SIZZLIN' HOT RATES
ASK US TODAY

www.TexasNational.com
4908 S. Jackson, Edinburg (956) 217-7100
201 S. Texas, Mercedes (956) 565-2485

Member FDIC Equal Housing LENDER

New York Deli

Big Food • Big Taste
(and Beatles Tunes)

BUSINESS LUNCH SPECIALS DAILY
From home cooking to sandwiches and salads

New York Deli
829 W Dove Ave
McAllen
(956) 631-8787

New York Deli II
122 North A Street
Harlingen
(956) 425-3500

New York Deli III
1631 East Price Road
Brownsville
(956) 550-0025

eries. Relationships have been strengthened by meetings at nursery expos around the state and by membership in the Texas Nursery and Landscape Association. Kinney tapped his immersion in horticulture, earned the designation TMCNP (Texas Master Certified Nursery Professional) and serves on the TNLA board. Gary is a past president of the organization. In addition, some of the original manufacturing reps are still supplying KBW.

But the business is like others with ups and downs, as well as seasonal fluctuations. KBW opened a distribution center in Tyler in 2001. The company, which both imports perlite and shade cloth from Mexico and exports supplies to Mexican greenhouses, built two warehouses in Mexico. While KBW continues to sell in Mexico, it no longer sends its trucks across the border. Kinney noted that nationally the industry has been flat since the recession began. But Texas horticultural business has taken the extra hit of long term drought.

The upside is that "people are getting a little more water conscious." Kinney said more people are turning to drip irrigation, microspray and mulching as ways to conserve water. Greenhouses are growing more drought tolerant and native plants. While older weekend gardeners are cutting back, newer gardeners are pursu-

ing organic products and starting to grow their own vegetables. In addition, Texas' population is growing which leads to more housing with landscaping. The customers of KBW's customers are requesting more decorative containers and instant color, leading to increased demand for more blooming plants.

Besides a catalog and online store, KBW maintains a modest showroom where small, local nurseries and landscaping companies can drop by to pick up weed barriers, plastic or metal edging material, hand tools, a variety of mulches and chemicals.

Mid-summer is a slower season at KBW. In late July, Gary and Austin Kinney were working with a crew using a new piece of equipment to bend frames for KBW's turnkey greenhouses. Some of them will be erected over pools.

Kinney is expecting a surge in business fol-

lowing widespread rains. Houston and central Texas have lost many mature plantings due to the drought. Those trees and brushes will have to be grown, hopefully in KBW pots and planting media with KBW bamboo stakes, under KBW shade cloth.

When it rains, the Kinney family will be ready.



Austin and Gary Kinney cooperate while bending pipe for greenhouse frames.(VBR)



the best Corporate Events

From Junior Executive to Chairman of the Board we have packages that fit all budgets!

Call today to make your reservation!

3301 N 23rd Street
McAllen, TX
956.686.1286
WWW.FLAMINGOBOWLONLINE.COM

NOWHERE ELSE!

CARDENAS

www.CardenasAutogroup.com

1013 E. Expy. 83 PHARR 782-8888

111 South Loop 499 HARLINGEN 425-6000



TOYOTA **SCION**

BMW **MAZDA**

In the Spotlight



IBC Bank in partnership with Operation Interdependence® collected over three tons of goods along with letters of support that will reach over 8,000 of our nation's servicemen and women. "The support from the community was overwhelming and contributed greatly to the unprecedented success of this year's drive. We are so thankful to all the organizations that have stepped up to support this great cause," said IBC Bank-McAllen Sr. VP Dora Brown. (Courtesy)



University of Phoenix, was recognized by NHPO (National Hispanic Professional Organization) for its participation in Operation Interdependence. University of Phoenix not only made a contribution of \$5,000, but it also served as a collection point for goods and letters of support throughout the event. (Courtesy)

Get Great Tasting Culligan® Drinking Water for About a Dollar a Day!



FREE Basic Installation of any Culligan® Reverse Osmosis Drinking Water System Rental

Bottleless Reverse Osmosis Water Cooler



Culligan®

better water. pure and simple.®

Call Today for a **FREE Water Analysis!**

800-698-5491

1300 W BUS 77 • SAN BENITO TX



A hands-on workshop, presented by the EPA and Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center, guided water system managers and technicians in measuring the amperage, voltage and other data related to water pump motors. Specialized software uses the data to determine how to operate the water pumps most efficiently. (VBR)



RUBY RED VENTURES

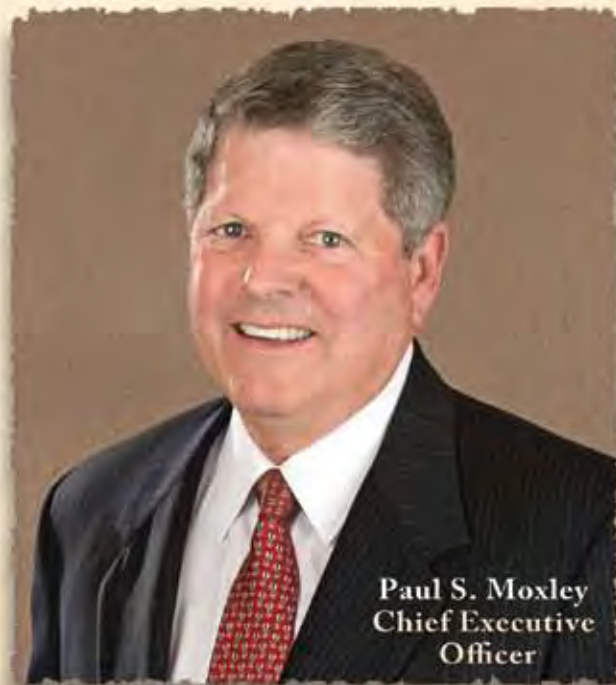
A MISSION EDC INITIATIVE

\$100,000 SMALL BUSINESS FUND

**ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS
SEPTEMBER 15, 2012**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:
MISSION EDC
(956) 585-0040**

It's good to bank with The People You Know™



Paul S. Moxley
Chief Executive
Officer

Texas Regional Bank is proud to announce the hiring of Paul Moxley as our new Chief Executive Officer. Paul's leadership, local industry knowledge and community involvement make him a natural fit for Texas Regional Bank and we are excited to call him

The People You Know™.



TEXAS REGIONAL BANK

The people you know.™

TEXASREGIONALBANK.COM

A SUBSIDIARY OF TEXAS STATE BANKSHARES, INC.



2019 S. 77 Sunshine Strip • Harlingen, Texas • (956) 428-7400
401 N St Marys St. • Falfurrias, Texas • (361) 325-5646
7000 N. 10th St, Suite #1 • McAllen, Texas • (956) 618-3808
805 Media Luna, Suite #101 • Brownsville, Texas • (956) 554-0155

FDIC