



# Free Magazine

February 2025



Explore Harlingen Magazine Online



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# From the Editor

By Lisa Campos

This is Lisa from Explore Harlingen. Welcome to the 17th issue of the Explore Harlingen Magazine: A Local's Guide to Harlingen, an entertainment magazine about Harlingen, Texas!

For 11 years, I have been informing locals and visitors about current events, activities, and family-owned businesses in Harlingen primarily on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/ExploreHarlingen](http://www.facebook.com/ExploreHarlingen)). I also have an online presence with my website, [www.exploreharlingenblog.com](http://www.exploreharlingenblog.com), and social media accounts on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube (@exploreharlingen). In this issue, we discuss Southwest Airlines' 50th anniversary of service



Courtesy of Lisa Campos

com, and social media accounts on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube (@exploreharlingen).

In this issue, we discuss Southwest Airlines' 50th anniversary of service

at Valley International Airport, a local biker bar and grill, an upcoming author convention, and more.

The Explore Harlingen Magazine is available digitally on my website at [www.exploreharlingenblog.com/magazine](http://www.exploreharlingenblog.com/magazine) (see QR code on the cover). Or you can pick up a copy at the first of every month locally around town

(locations are listed on my website). ♦

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# A Golden Partnership: 50 Years of LUV at VIA

By Lisa Campos

Texas' own Southwest Airlines (Southwest) is now one of the largest airlines in the world by many measures, a feat that co-founder Herb Kelleher certainly smiles on from heaven, much as he does from a downtown Harlingen mural that immortalizes his vision. On peak days, more than half-a-million people fly with Southwest on more than 4,000 flights across eight time zones.

What famously started as an idea



Courtesy of Southwest Airlines

sketched on a cocktail napkin to connect Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio with affordable air service began its expansion in 1975 from that Texas Triangle with

Harlingen service.

Valley International Airport in Harlingen (HRL) will host City leaders and Southwest representatives in a community commemoration of that first scheduled flight to South Texas on February 11, 1975.

Marv Esterly, Director of Valley International Airport, expressed his appreciation by saying, "Southwest Airlines' arrival at Valley International Airport 50 years ago was a turning point for air travel in the Lower Rio Grande Valley (RGV). Their dedication to

providing affordable and reliable service has made a lasting impact, helping Valley International Airport become the gateway to the RGV that it is today. We are deeply grateful for their partnership and look forward to continuing to work together to serve our community and travelers for decades to come."

"Five decades of continual community service only is possible through partnership, and our relationship with Valley International Airport keeps our Customer Service scores high and

our costs low, which translates into the low fares we offer our Customers," said James Campbell, Southwest Station Leader at HRL.

Southwest flies nonstop to more destinations from HRL than any other airline out of the RGV: Austin, Dallas-Love Field, and Houston-Hobby. That schedule enables connections between the RGV and more than 100 destinations across the U.S., including Hawaii, as well as the Caribbean, Mexico, and Central America.

"My grandfather used to say, 'there goes Herb' when a LUV jet would overfly his house in Laurel Park," said Brad Hawkins, Spokesman for Southwest. "17 years in my Southwest career, I now know generations of people across the Valley who have relied on us to connect them with important moments, places, and people in their lives, with our best-in-the-business Employees at Valley International Airport ushering their every journey."

Mayor Norma Sepulveda observed, "February 11th marks a monumental milestone for Harlingen and



Courtesy of Valley International Airport

the entire RGV as we celebrate 50 years of Southwest Airlines' service to our community. Southwest's commitment to Harlingen has been instrumental in connecting our

region to the world and fostering growth and opportunity for our residents and businesses. We are proud to share in this legacy and look forward to many more years of collaboration and shared success."

Additionally, Nicolás Mirman, Commercial Director of Valley International Airport, reflected, "Celebrating 50 years of Southwest Airlines at Valley International Airport is a testament to the strength of this



Courtesy of Southwest Airlines



Courtesy of Southwest Airlines



incredible partnership. Over the years, Southwest has not only brought connectivity to the Valley, but has also created countless opportunities for growth, tourism, and economic development. This

anniversary is a moment of pride for all of us at HRL, and we remain committed to supporting Southwest as they continue to serve our community with excellence.” The 50th anniversary celebration will take

place on February 11, 2025, in the Valley International Airport main first floor lobby at 1 pm. The public is invited. ♦



Courtesy of Valley International Airport



Courtesy of Southwest Airlines

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Courtesy of Valley International Airport

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## Local Flavors

# Where Food, Family, and Motorcycles Meet

By Remi Gibbs

Often misunderstood because of its name, 2 and a Crew Grill and Motorcycle Shop is far more than just a biker bar or repair shop. This unique dining destination on Business 83 offers much more than even a meal—it serves up a slice of community, camaraderie, and housemade comfort food in an atmosphere where everyone feels like family.

Owners Julie and Vattell "Scooter" Cooke

opened the doors in May 2020 with a vision of creating a space where motorcycle enthusiasts could relax, grab a cold beer, and maybe get a patch sewn on their vest while their bike was serviced. But the venue has evolved into so much more—a family- and pet-friendly haven for locals, Winter Texans, and anyone looking for great food, good company, and warm hospitality.

Don't let the name fool you—2 and a Crew is a gem waiting to be

discovered.

### Where Everybody Knows Your Name

Walking through the doors of 2 and a Crew feels like stepping into a place where you belong. Julie and the staff are quick to greet regulars by name, often with their favorite drink already in hand. This friendly, personal touch has made the cafe a favorite for Winter Texans, locals, and motorcycle enthusiasts.

The name "2 and a Crew" represents Julie, Scooter, and their vibrant, blended family. While most of "the Crew" have ventured off to pursue their own paths, Julie and Scooter remain at the heart of it all, taking on the heavy lifting. Their colorful and welcoming family ensures that everyone feels at home, and once you visit, you'll be embraced as part of the family, too.

### A Taste of Comfort

A former culinary arts teacher, Julie crafts the menu from her own recipes, offering housemade comfort

food that's sure to make you smile. From hearty burgers and sandwiches to daily specials like brisket sandwiches or chili dogs loaded with "the kitchen sink," every bite is infused with love. They are also open on the weekends for a hearty breakfast.

Dessert lovers are in for a treat, as Julie also handles the baking. On any given day, you'll find three to five sweet options like muffins, cheesecakes, turnovers, or pineapple upside-down cake. Plus, their signature cinnamon-glazed pecans, cashews, and almonds are always available for a salty and nutty snack.

### Live Entertainment and Events

There's always something happening at 2 and a Crew. The big, covered patio is the hub for live entertainment, karaoke nights, and even Friday afternoon (2 pm to 5 pm) music trivia hosted by a DJ. Saturdays feature live bands, and the Cookes often organize special events, like their upcoming scavenger hunt on



Courtesy of 2 and a Crew

February 8, complete with live music, raffles, and vendors. Motorcycles and cars are both welcome. They're also gearing up for their 5th annual BBQ cook-off.

For those looking to celebrate milestones, 2 and a Crew happily hosts private events like weddings, showers, and parties. And there's a playful rule here: if you meet your significant other at the restaurant, you have to get married there—a promise a few couples are already planning to fulfill!

### A Legacy of Service and Passion

Julie's deep roots in the Rio Grande Valley, combined with Scooter's 14 years of Army service and TSA career, are woven into the fabric of their business. Julie's

passion for feeding people and creating joy through her food is at the heart of what they do. As she says, "You need to make sure you love what

you do." That way, the daily grind will still bring you joy. Scooter's passion for motorcycles, background as an Army mechanic, and involvement with the Southern Justice Law Enforcement Motorcycle Club add a layer of community and purpose to the restaurant and motorcycle repair shop.

### Stop By and Stay Awhile

Whether you're looking for a hearty meal, a cold drink, or a place to relax with friends, 2 and a Crew delivers. Cameras throughout the venue ensure safety and peace of mind, and the

welcoming atmosphere makes it easy to feel at home.

So, swing by for some great food, lively entertainment, and genuine Texas hospitality.

**Location:** 2 and a Crew Grill and Motorcycle Shop, 1808 US Business 83, La Feria, just east of White Ranch Road

### Specialties:

comfort food, sweet treats, live music, and a welcoming community vibe

**Also available for:** small caterings and on-site functions (capacity of 50 inside/60 outside)



Courtesy of 2 and a Crew



Courtesy of 2 and a Crew



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**Motorcycle maintenance:**  
call Scooter for an appointment for tires or oil changes, 956-357-4441

**Follow them on Facebook:**  
@2andacrew  
motorcycleshop  
Stop in, grab a bite, and see why this hidden gem is a favorite of those in the know. You might even leave with new friends or your future significant other! ♦



Courtesy of 2 and a Crew



Courtesy of Remi Gibbs

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# Moves, Adds, and Changes

By Lisa Campos

This column discusses business-related updates in Harlingen.

## Achievements

University of Texas Rio Grande Valley history lecturer, Dr. William Yancey, is a contestant in the Jeopardy! Champions Wildcard Tournament. He competed in the quarterfinals on January 13 and semifinal on January 21. Dr. Yancey made it all the way to the finals of the Champions Wildcard Tournament on January 23 and 24,

but was ultimately defeated by Mehal Shah, a software engineer from Seattle, Washington.

## Announcements

A new shopping center, Shoppes at Paso Real, is under construction at the corner of Paso Real and Haine Drive. The developers plan to have a mix of retail and service businesses, which will be announced at a later date.

## New Businesses

Bloome Beauty Bar & Boutique, a beauty, cosmetic, and personal care shop, opened



Courtesy of Lisa Campos

in Harlingen in late September. They are located at 6704 W. Expressway 83, D106 and can be reached at 956-230-1034.

## New Cafés and Restaurants

Puerto de Café, a new coffee shop, opened at the end of December. This family-owned café sells coffees, sweets, and a small selection of sandwiches. They plan on expanding their menu as they get established. They are located at 406 E. Harrison (the former location of Café 406) and can be reached at 956-238-8307. Dine-in and drive-thru service are available.



Courtesy of Jeopardy.com



Courtesy of Lisa Campos



Courtesy of Lisa Campos

## Moves

Gentry Gym moved into a larger 18,250 square foot facility on January 1. Although the original gym was completely unairconditioned, the main gym in the

new space has air conditioning, with an outdoor “gym 2” space for those who prefer the original open air concept. They also have a ladies-only gym, posing room, social media room, and nutrition bar, with

more features such as a recovery area, kids club, and barber shop becoming available in the coming months. The grand opening is planned for March 1. They are located at 1627 Wilson Rd. and can be reached at 956-921-7068.

## Closings

Vintage on Jackson, a thrift store benefiting the Sunny Glen Children’s Home, closed on January 12. After four years of business, Sunny Glen decided to close the store so that they can use its resources to best help the children in foster care. The space at 101 E. Jackson will be transformed to provide vital services to children and families in the community.

Two national chain stores, Party City and Big Lots, announced closings of all their locations nationwide. Sales have begun at both stores and discounts are expected to increase as the closing

dates approach. Since the original announcement for Big Lots was made, Big Lots is now partnering with an investment firm to sell a number of its stores with Variety Wholesalers to purchase some of them to keep them open. The locations that will stay open have yet to be identified or announced. Girl of All Trades Tea and Coffee House closed its second location at 101 N. Stuart Place Road, Suite F in December 2024. It had only been open for nine months. The original location at 102 W. Jackson remains open.

## Anniversaries

LexiLo Salon celebrated five years in business on December 21. The salon had to close temporarily due to Covid but made it through and continues to grow. They are located at 1305 N. 77 Sunshine Strip and can be reached at 956-320-0810. ♦

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Courtesy of Vintage on Jackson

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## Recurring Events

### Downtown Market Days

First Saturday (February 1),  
9 am to 3 pm  
Jackson Street and  
Centennial Plaza



The Market at Wild August  
Nursery and Flower Farm  
Every Saturday (February 1,  
8, 15, and 22),  
9 am to 12 noon  
16802 Garrett Road

Harlingen Farmers Market  
Every Saturday (February 1,  
8, 15, and 22),  
3 pm to 4:30 pm  
2nd Street and Tyler

Valle Vista Mall Market Days  
Every 2nd Saturday  
(February 8), 11 am to 7 pm

Harlingen Art Night  
Last Friday (February 28),  
7 pm to 10 pm  
“A” Street and Jackson

## February Special Events

Women Empowering Women  
February 6, 12 noon to 1 pm  
Greater Chamber of  
Harlingen

Total Rehab 5K and  
1 Mile Fun Run  
February 8, 8 am  
Arroyo Park



Love for Education:  
Benefitting the Harlingen  
Area Educational Foundation  
February 8,  
7 pm to 12 midnight  
Harlingen Convention Center

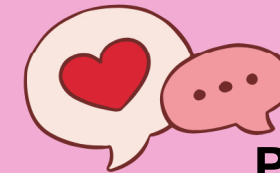
Harlingen Marathon  
February 9, 6:30 am  
Lon C. Hill Park



Harlingen Concert  
Association Presents  
Jason Lyle Black  
February 11, 7:30 pm  
Christian Fellowship Church

Recovery Conference  
February 14-16  
Connect Point Harlingen

Rodgers & Hammerstein’s  
Cinderella  
February 21, 22, 28, March 1,  
7:30 pm February 23,  
March 2, 2:30 pm  
Harlingen Community  
Theatre



Small Business Saturday  
February 22, 6 pm to 11 pm  
The Moon Rock

Harlingen Concert  
Association Presents Shake,  
Rattle & Roll  
February 25, 7:30 pm  
Christian Fellowship Church

## Beyond Harlingen

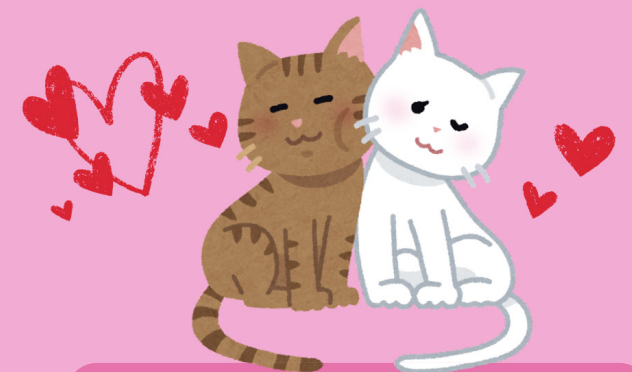
Smokin’ on the Rio: World  
Championship BBQ Cookoff  
February 7-8  
Rio Grande Valley Livestock  
Show (Mercedes)

31st Annual Fiesta de  
La Feria  
February 15, 11 am to 11 pm  
Veterans Memorial Park  
(La Feria)

Don’t Worry Be Fluffy  
(Gabriel Iglesias Comedy)  
Tour  
February 16  
Payne Arena (Hidalgo)

SPI Market Days  
February 21-23  
South Padre Island  
Convention Center

Love is Brewing Market  
February 22, 6 pm to 10 pm  
5x5 Brewery (Mission)



*Events subject to change.*

*Check Explore Harlingen  
on Facebook for the latest  
updates.*



# Recipes

## Keto Heart-Shaped Meat Lovers' Pizzas



Courtesy of Mamie Moon

By Mamie Moon

For the month of love, let's make a delicious heart-shaped chicken-crust meat lovers' pizza.

You will need the following ingredients:

- 1.15 pounds of ground chicken

- ½ cup pepperoni
- ½ cup mild Italian sausage (cooked)
- 1 cup Parmesan cheese
- ½ cup mozzarella or sharp cheddar cheese
- 1 cup marinara sauce
- Pinch of pepper
- Pinch of garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning

You will also need the following supplies:

- Parchment paper
- Large baking sheet

### Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
2. In a bowl, add the



Courtesy of Mamie Moon

Parmesan cheese, pepper, garlic powder, and the Italian seasoning to the ground chicken, combining with clean hands.

3. Line the baking sheet

with the parchment paper. Spread the ground chicken onto the parchment paper and shape it into a heart. A heart-shaped pizza crust adds to the love this pizza is made from.

4. Bake the ground chicken pizza crust for 20 minutes on one side, then flip it over and bake the other side for an additional 10 minutes.

5. When the chicken crust has finished baking and has a brown color to it, it's time to add the toppings. Smear some of the marinara sauce on the top and add as much pepperoni and Italian sausage as desired. Top it all off with



Courtesy of Mamie Moon

either mozzarella and/or sharp cheddar cheese.

6. Toss the completed pizza back into the oven and bake it for another five minutes. Allow it to cool

and enjoy it with someone you love! Mamie Moon, owner of Mamie Bakes, turned Keto baker when she was diagnosed with Crohn's disease in 2005. She ditched

sugar, gluten, and lactose and became the boss of her own health. She is a home-based Keto baker whose treats can be purchased and picked up locally in Harlingen. ♦



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**Event  
Spotlight**

# South Texas AuthorCon Highlights

## Local Talent



Courtesy of South Texas AuthorCon

By Abigail Muñiz-Garcia

Featuring 45 local authors and a celebrity illustrator, South Texas AuthorCon, is set to happen February 14 and 15 at Plaza San Benito in San Benito, Texas.

This free event is in its second year and co-founder David Norec says it's a unique opportunity to feature local individuals.

"We want to showcase talent here in the Rio Grande Valley," he said. "It's to highlight the local talent, whether it's authors or illustrators."

This year Norec, who authored "The Adventures of Exo and Cy," hopes to double

the attendance of the event, which took place at the McAllen Creative Incubator last year. They had close to 1,000 attendees at the one-day event and featured 30 local authors.

The now two-day event will open to area schools on Friday, February 14. Students attending the event will get a free book and commemorative poster.

"Adding that day specifically for schools, we weren't able to do that last year," Norec said. "Hopefully that will lead to other opportunities with local school districts."

Co-founder David Leija, author of "TK's

First Lesson," hopes the event will grow every year.

"We made a small splash last year," Leija said. "It's gonna pick up steam and it'll turn into a premier event."

Leija and Norec met and became friends a few years ago within the local author circuit. During conversations, Leija mentioned they spoke about the possibility of working together with the same goal in mind: to create a platform for local talent that would take place here in the Rio Grande Valley.

"The worst thing that'll

happen is no one shows up, right?" Leija said was a thought that crossed his mind when the event was initially discussed between the two.

Norec added his love for comic-con events also fueled the idea.

"I love going to comic-cons. When I became an author, I thought it would be cool to have an author event but in comic-con style," Norec said.

On February 15, the general public is invited to visit. Attendees can expect to find food vendors outdoors and once inside, take part in panels and meet all the



Courtesy of South Texas AuthorCon



Courtesy of South Texas AuthorCon

local authors. One of the celebrities in attendance will be illustrator Maddi Gonzalez, a Rio Grande Valley native who illustrated a Goosebumps graphic novel for R.L. Stine. The participants will also include two student authors, a nine-year-old who wrote a book and a high school student who won a

writing contest.

For more information on the event visit the South Texas AuthorCon page on Facebook or their website, southtexasauthorcon.com. For more information on Leija and Norec's books and initiatives, visit their websites: tkmovement.com and fitlitmovement.org. ♦

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February 2025



Courtesy of South Texas AuthorCon

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**Notable  
Nonprofits**

# Rescuing, Healing, and Rehoming Dogs in Need: Ana's Safe Haven

By Beth Marie Cantu  
Ensign

In the scorching heat of the Rio Grande Valley (RGV), it's all too common to see dogs abandoned on the streets. In a region plagued by animal neglect and overpopulation, one woman's response to this harsh reality became an urgent call for change.

Ana's Safe Haven Rescue is a nonprofit animal rescue organization, focused on rescuing, healing, and rehoming dogs in need. The rescue relies on a small network of fosters and donors in its efforts to ensure every dog is placed in a loving forever home.

Ana Tamez, founder and president of Ana's Safe Haven Rescue, is a passionate advocate for animal welfare, believing every dog deserves a second chance at a life filled with love. A retired Border Patrol agent, Tamez became deeply aware of the neglect and abandonment faced by animals in the RGV, especially in the harsh

tropical climate. Her journey into animal rescue began in the early 2000s when she started fostering animals at the Palm Valley Animal Center.

"I was already divorced, didn't have any kids... and I had two dogs at the time, so I said, 'Let me go to the shelter and look into fostering.'" Her fostering adventure spanned many years, filled with new homes in new locations and countless furry faces, but ultimately, when Tamez returned to the RGV, she realized she had the capacity to do even more. Starting small, Tamez created a dedicated rescue area on her property to offer abandoned and abused animals a safe haven. Over the years, the rescue grew, placing hundreds of dogs in forever homes. Her work isn't just about taking in animals—it's about giving them a second chance at life.

Ana Tamez's commitment to finding the best homes for her rescues often leads her to seek adoption



Courtesy of Ana Tamez

opportunities beyond the RGV. While she and her amazing volunteers (who Tamez is extremely proud of and grateful for) work tirelessly to rehabilitate and care for each dog, she recognizes that local resources are limited, and sometimes, the best fit for the animals is outside of the region. As a result, Tamez typically places

dogs in loving homes north of the RGV, even in other states, where the demand for adoptable dogs is higher.

The rescue's success stories are countless. One dog after another has found a loving forever home through Ana's efforts, and each adoption is a testament to the power of compassion.



Courtesy of Ana Tamez

Ana's network of fosters and adopters (many of whom generously support the rescue in honor of their new furry loved ones) continues to grow, as more people recognize the value in giving these dogs a better life.

And yet, with each success, Tamez remains humble, always focused on the bigger picture: educating the public about responsible pet ownership, spaying and neutering, and the importance of preventative care. As Tamez notes, "Many people really don't care about their animals... They see dogs as things, things they can just discard when they don't need them anymore." This harsh reality has driven Tamez's advocacy

for better treatment of pets, with a special focus on heartworm prevention—a silent killer of dogs that many owners fail to recognize.

Heartworms,



Courtesy of Ana Tamez

transmitted by mosquitoes, are rampant in the RGV due to the warm climate, making it a serious but often overlooked threat for animals. Tamez stresses that heartworms are preventable with proper monthly medication, but many pet owners either don't know about it or choose to ignore it until it's too late. By raising awareness, Tamez hopes to reduce the suffering caused by this disease and ensure more dogs live long, healthy lives. For her, prevention isn't just about saving money on costly treatments—it's about saving lives.

The rescue relies heavily on its foster network, donations, and fundraising efforts to

keep operating. Tamez has hosted raffles, worked with donors, and utilized online campaigns to cover medical expenses for the animals in her care. In addition to these often costly procedures, the cost of general care adds up. Tamez emphasizes that food and supply donations are always appreciated and welcome. "I can never have enough dog food," she shares with a chuckle.

Despite the financial challenges that come with running a nonprofit rescue, Tamez's focus remains steadfast: "The most important thing is rescuing more dogs." In addition to her ongoing efforts, Tamez dreams of expanding her reach.



While the rescue has already placed hundreds of dogs in loving homes, the need is greater than ever.

“We could rescue a lot more,” Tamez says, though she acknowledges the challenges of limited foster homes. Her commitment to responsible rescue ensures that she never overextends herself, a crucial lesson that has kept the rescue debt-free, unlike many other organizations facing financial struggles.

Ana’s Safe Haven Rescue is not just about saving dogs; it’s about changing the culture of animal welfare in the RGV. Tamez’s message to the community is simple: “Have a heart. If you have space in your home, if you have an extra room, consider fostering. If you can’t foster, consider donating or volunteering. It takes a village to make a difference.”

As Tamez continues her mission, her impact



*Courtesy of Ana Tamez*

on the lives of animals in the region cannot be overstated. She embodies the spirit of compassion, selflessness, and perseverance. Ana’s Safe Haven Rescue is not just a place for dogs to find a second chance—it’s a symbol of what one person can do when she refuses to give up on those who cannot help themselves.

In the years to come,

Ana hopes to continue to expand her rescue, to reach more animals, and to inspire others to join the fight for animal welfare in the RGV. With her unyielding passion and dedication, Ana’s Safe Haven Rescue will undoubtedly remain a sanctuary for the forgotten souls of the region, a place where love, compassion, and hope shine brightly.

If you’re interested in learning more about Ana’s Safe Haven Rescue or want to get involved, visit their website at [www.anassafehavenrescue.org](http://www.anassafehavenrescue.org). Whether you’re looking to adopt, foster, or donate, every bit of support makes a difference in the lives of animals who need it most. ♦

# HARLINGEN Concert ASSOCIATION

## 2024 / 2025 Concert Season

*Dates, artists, and programs are subject to change.*

**Holiday Harmonies**  
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**Natural Woman:  
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featuring Katie Pinder Brown  
Tuesday, January 14, 2025

Award-winning singer and piano entertainer whose dynamic voice, charismatic presence, and impressive repertoire have dazzled and delighted international audiences.

**Bachelors of Broadway**  
(Gentlemen of the Theatre)  
Thursday, January 30, 2025

Three of New York City's top theatrical performers offer soaring and thrilling melodies in contemporary three-part vocal harmony. This show breathes new life into vintage classics from the Golden Age of Broadway, with lush symphonic arrangements of songs from both contemporary and classical musicals.

**Jason Lyle Black**  
(100 Hits of Stage & Screen)  
Tuesday, February 11, 2025

Pianist Black returns to the stage with an all new show. "100 Hits of Stage and Screen" features 100 iconic songs from the hits of rock legends like Queen, AC/DC, and the Rolling Stones, to musicals like Wicked and Sweeney Todd, to film and television soundtracks like Pirates of the Caribbean, Star Wars and Game of Thrones.

**Shake, Rattle & Roll**  
Tuesday,  
February 25, 2025

Step back in time and immerse yourself in the electrifying energy of the 1950s with the ultimate rock n' roll show! Join The Sweethearts and our rockin' male vocalist as they transport you to the era when Elvis Presley, Connie Francis, and Chuck Berry ruled the airwaves. With authentic costumes, vibrant choreography, and non-stop hits like "Johnny B. Goode" and "Great Balls of Fire," these incredible singers will have you tapping your feet and shaking your hips as they celebrate the golden age of rock n' roll!

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Venue is the Christian Fellowship Church Auditorium, 901 N. Loop 499, Harlingen, Texas



Artist of the Month

# Marcie Rodriguez's Story of Worship, Inspiration, and Legacy



Courtesy of Marcie Rodriguez

By Beth Marie Cantu Ensign

"Art is my outlet. It blocks out the world and lets me focus." With these simple yet profound words, local artist Marcie Rodriguez invites us

into her world, where creativity has become a sanctuary.

Rodriguez's roots are firmly planted in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV); raised in the small town of Lyford and now calling Harlingen home,

Rodriguez's artistic journey is as vibrant and textured as the RGV itself.

Rodriguez's artistic journey began in grade school, during a time when she was learning to navigate life's ups and downs. What started as a simple pastime in her art class soon became her refuge. Even now, art

remains a source of solace and a means of worship, often reflecting her deeply rooted Christian faith. For Rodriguez, creating art is an act of devotion and praise, with many of her recent works featuring religious themes.

Though primarily self-taught, Rodriguez's skill with charcoal—a medium



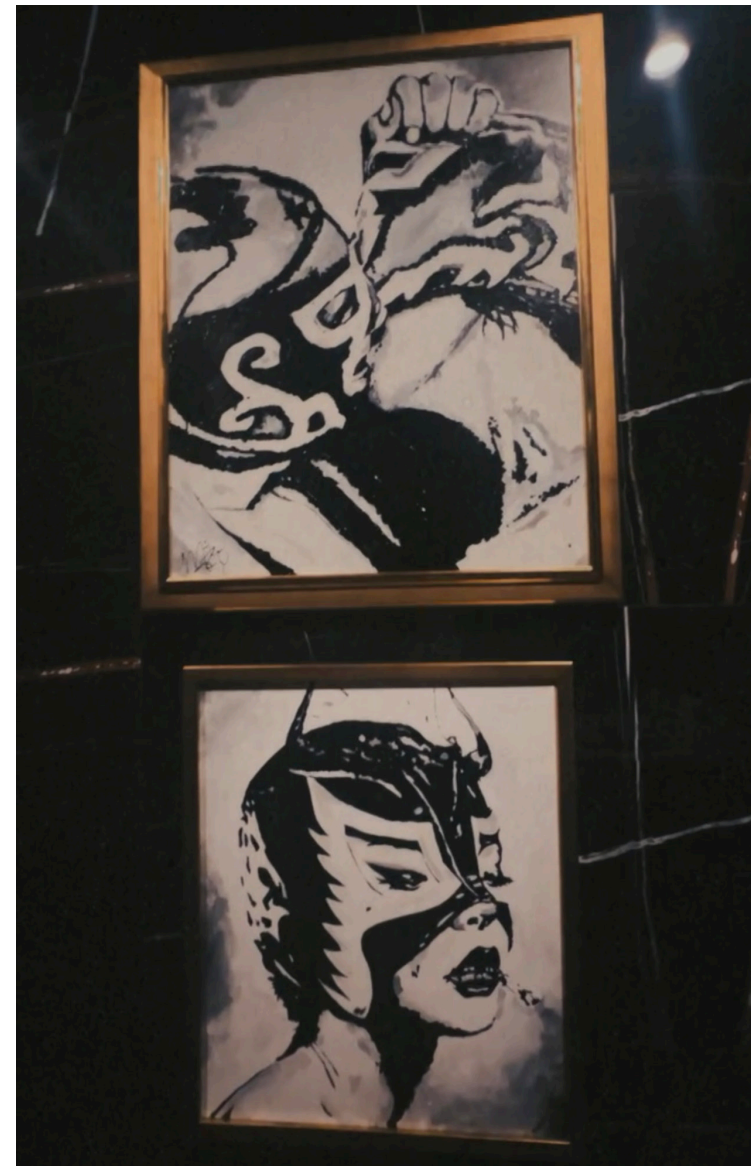
Courtesy of Marcie Rodriguez

she fell in love with during high school—sets her apart. Charcoal, as she describes, is raw and real, allowing her to bring out depth and emotion in each piece. While she has embraced painting, starting with small canvases in 2019, charcoal remains her preferred medium, offering a stark contrast between light and shadow that enhances her evocative style.

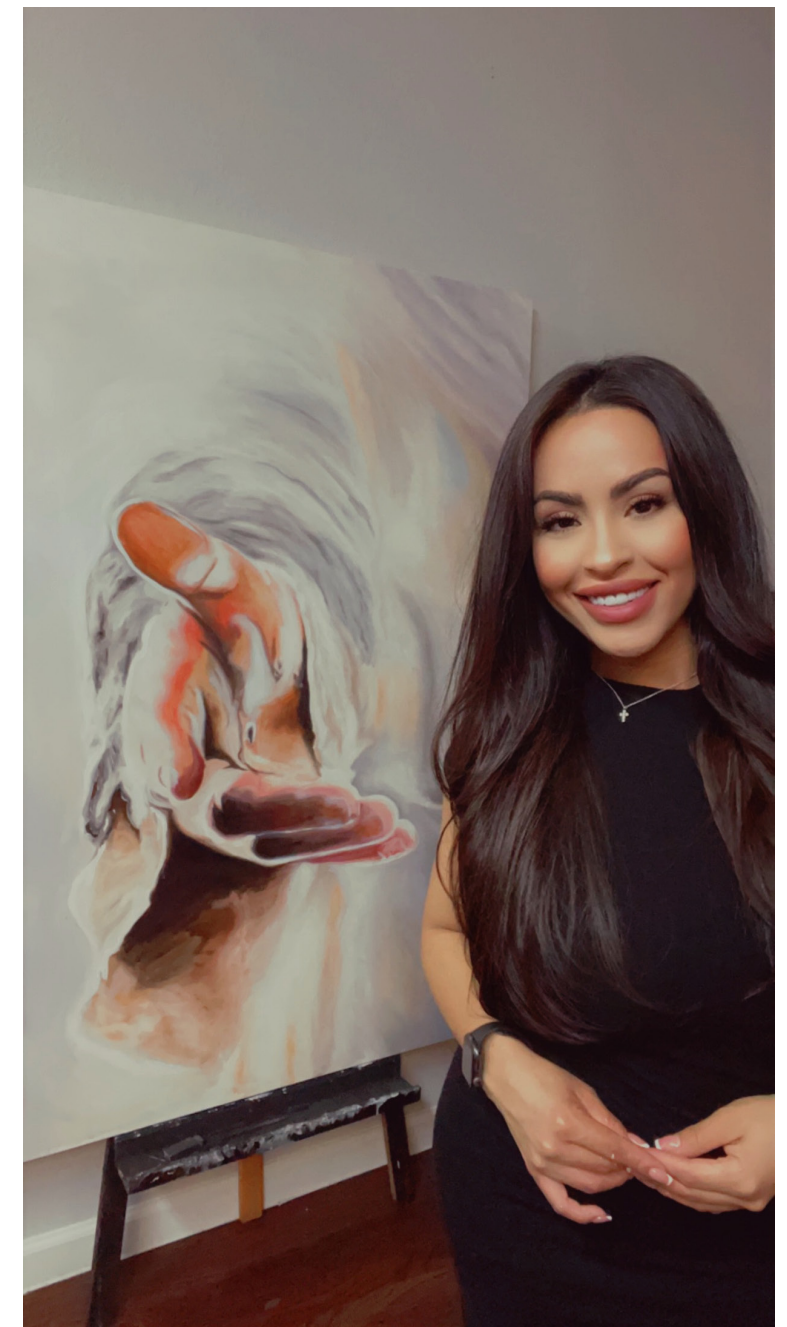
Rodriguez's artistic influences include the legendary Frida Kahlo,

whom she admires for her cultural pride, resilience, and deeply personal style. Much like her idol, Rodriguez draws upon her heritage, infusing her charcoal works with themes of Mexican culture and a contemporary spiritual essence.

When asked about her experience selling art, she admitted that public art events aren't something she eagerly anticipates. Like many of the celebrated artists of the past—Cézanne, Van



Courtesy of Marcie Rodriguez



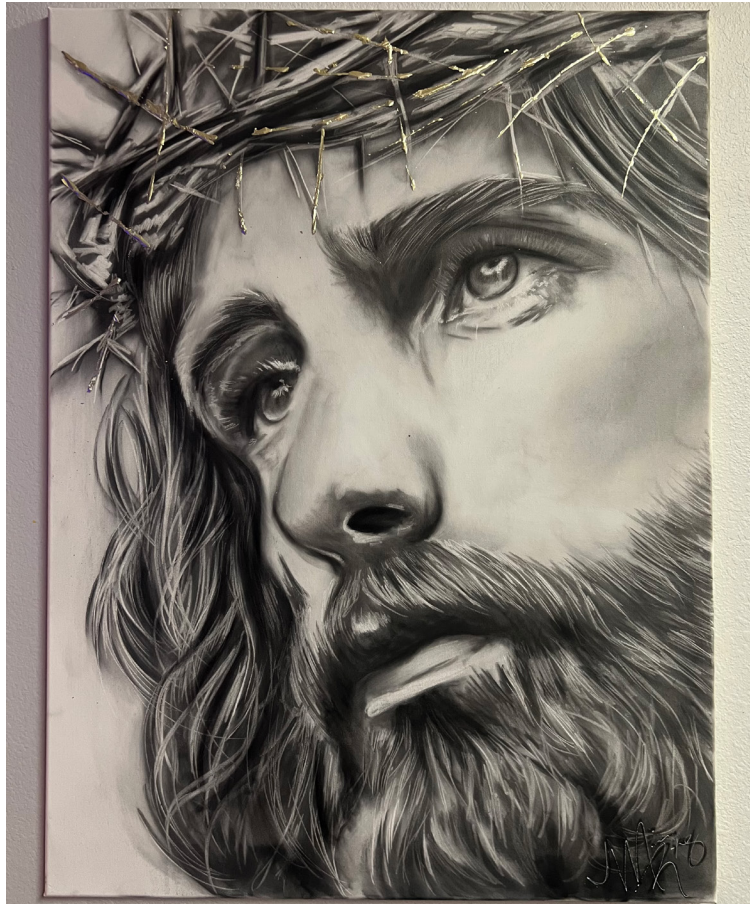
Courtesy of Marcie Rodriguez

Gogh, and even Kahlo—who favored solitude while creating, Rodriguez also enjoys working in the comfort of her own company. "I'm an introvert. I can be in my house all day by myself and I'm happy," she giggles, adding that while she initially explored the idea of joining art-focused vending events, it wasn't for her. Instead, Rodriguez prefers to sell

her art through social media means, primarily Instagram and Facebook. Though she doesn't yet have a website, it's a goal she hopes to achieve in the future.

Currently, Rodriguez is not taking custom commissions, instead focusing on creating what inspires her. Someday, she dreams of having her own gallery. For now, she paints in a corner of





Courtesy of Marcie Rodriguez

her living room. While the space is modest, she envisions having a dedicated studio where she can create, display, and sell her art.

One of Rodriguez's proudest achievements is her collaboration with Ramses Tacos & Tequila in Harlingen, where her art is displayed prominently throughout the restaurant's two locations. Seeing her work in such a popular space was surreal, and she considers it one of her biggest accomplishments.

Despite her success, Rodriguez stays grounded. As a single mother, she balances her artistic passion with the responsibilities of raising

her son. She credits her son as her biggest inspiration, the person who pushes her to keep creating and striving for more.

Looking ahead, Rodriguez hopes to expand her repertoire by exploring landscapes—a genre she hasn't yet tackled. While many find portraits of humans challenging, she views landscapes as an even greater test of her abilities. She aims to push herself further and grow as an artist. And her advice to emerging artists is both practical and profound: don't let life get in the way of creating. "Especially if you're young," she adds.

"If it's something that you love and you know you're supposed to be doing... make the time to do it and keep on creating."

A poignant story Rodriguez shares involves her father, who passed away when she was very young. "He loved singing—it was his passion," she recounts. Her father had recorded his voice on a tape recorder, leaving behind a tangible piece of himself. This memory profoundly shaped her view on life and art. "You may not even know it, but you're leaving pieces of yourself every time you create something. People need to seek out what they love and leave their mark; tomorrow is not promised."

Transcending material possessions, she believes that leaving behind a piece of your passion, a piece of your art, is profoundly more important than material objects. "Whatever you love to do, leave proof

of it behind somewhere. Yes, people leave behind jewelry or clothes for their children but passing down a piece of what you love to do is so meaningful," she said, her voice filled with emotion. Rodriguez's words carry a powerful message: art is not just about expression, it's about legacy; every creation leaving behind a piece of the creator—mind, heart, and soul—to be appreciated and cherished for generations to come.

Marcie Rodriguez's heartfelt story inspires others to pursue their passions and leave their mark on the world. For Rodriguez, art is more than a hobby; it's a way of life, a means of worship, and a lasting testament to the beauty of creation in all its forms. Every stroke of her brush and every line of her charcoal sketches tells a story of resilience, faith, and a quiet determination to leave a lasting mark on the world. ♦



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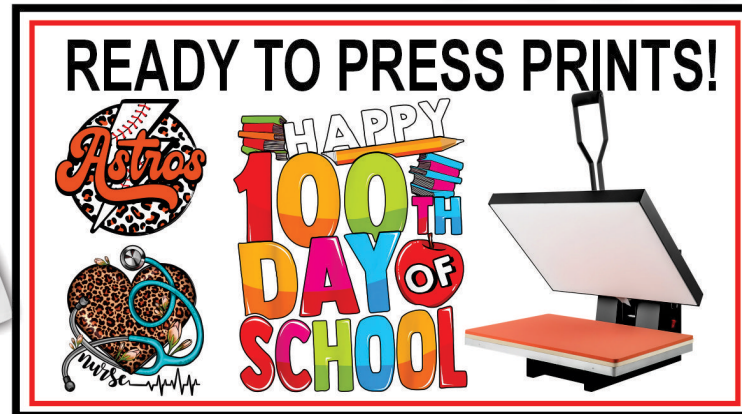
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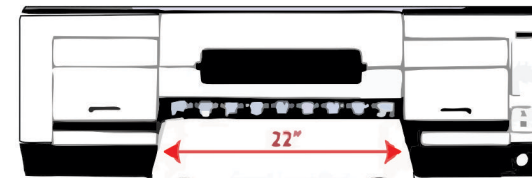
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# Sports

By Roel Rodriguez

The 2024 Harlingen South Lady Hawks softball team concluded a magical season with a very impressive playoff run, making it to the 2024 Texas UIL Class 5A State Softball Championship.

The Lady Hawks battled against Melisa High School and earned the State Championship Runner Up trophy as the 2nd best Class 5A softball team in the entire state of Texas, making history for the storied Harlingen South softball program.

Last year's team experienced and learned so much on their journey to the championship and there is no doubt that the bar has been set very high for the 2025 Lady Hawk Softball program and the future generation of Lady Hawk softball players.

The 2025 Lady Hawks softball team mantra is "Unfinished Business – No Fear, All Faith." They are poised, ready, and hungry to get this year's high school softball season underway implementing the lessons learned from last season. A return trip to the State Softball Championship

## No Fear, All Faith

is their intent and the Lady Hawks know that it will take hard work, dedication, and a strong team effort to achieve their goals.

Coach Jose Rios is returning as the Lady Hawks softball team coach. It is very easy to be impressed with Coach Rios and how he manages his team, players, and program. He is a humble and spiritual individual who is driven by a higher purpose and truly understands his role as the leader of this elite team and players. Coach Rios' style is a perfect balance of genuine concern for every player and coach combined with a love of the game, grit, and a never-give-up attitude. It is evident that he has created a distinguished culture with his program and the Lady Hawk players are all in with a "Team First" mindset.

For the 2025 season, the Lady Hawks softball program is returning most of their players from their State final squad. This team is loaded and ready to achieve new goals in 2025.

Leading the way for the Lady Hawks this year are starters Amira Rodriguez, Lexi Sandoval, Kara



Courtesy of Rotary Club of Harlingen

Jensen, Kailee Silva, and Makayla Lamb, to name a few. Amira Rodriguez is already a D1 college commit and plans to continue her softball career after graduation at the University of Washington.

There is no doubt that the Lady Hawks program has several players with the potential to play at the collegiate level so do not miss the opportunity to see them play in our backyard before they are gone.

The Lady Hawk softball team kicked off the season by hosting the defending Texas UIL Class 6A State Champion, Weslaco High School, on Saturday, January 25, 2025, at 9:30 am at Harlingen South.

Game tickets may be purchased on the Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District Athletics website, <https://harlingencisdtx.sites.thrillshare.com/page/online-ticketing>. ♦



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## LADY HAWKS

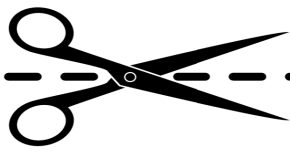
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JAN. 28	@ HARLINGEN (S)	AWAY	6:00PM	MAR. 14	@ BROWNSVILLE PORTER	AWAY	6:30PM
JAN. 31	vs LYFORD (S)	HOME	6:00PM	MAR. 18	vs DONNA NORTH (PARENTS NIGHT)	HOME	6:30PM
FEB. 04	@ PSJA HIGH/MISSION VETS (S)	AWAY	6:00PM	MAR. 21	vs BROWNSVILLE RIVERA	HOME	6:30PM
FEB. 07	@ NIKKI ROWE (S)	AWAY	6:00PM	MAR. 25	@ BROWNSVILLE PACE	AWAY	6:30PM
FEB. 11	@ BROWNSVILLE RIVERA	AWAY	6:30PM	MAR. 28	vs WESLACO EAST	HOME	6:30PM
FEB. 13-15	vs CALALLEN TOURNAMENT	AWAY	TBA	APR. 01	vs MERCEDES	HOME	6:30PM
FEB. 18	vs BROWNSVILLE PACE (YOUTH NIGHT)	HOME	6:30PM	APR. 04	@ EDCOUCH-ELSA	AWAY	6:30PM
FEB. 20-22	@ SAN ANTONIO TOURNAMENT	AWAY	TBA	APR. 08	vs BROWNSVILLE LOPEZ	HOME	6:30PM
FEB. 25	@ WESLACO EAST	AWAY	6:30PM	APR. 11	@ DONNA HIGH SCHOOL	AWAY	6:30PM
FEB. 28	@ MERCEDES	AWAY	6:30PM	APR. 15	vs BROWNSVILLE PORTER (SENIOR NIGHT)	HOME	6:30PM
MAR. 04	vs EDCOUCH-ELSA	HOME	6:30PM	APR. 17	@ DONNA NORTH	AWAY	5:30PM
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