



# Free Magazine

December 2023



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Cover photo courtesy Bullrider  
Western Wear / Cita's Boutique

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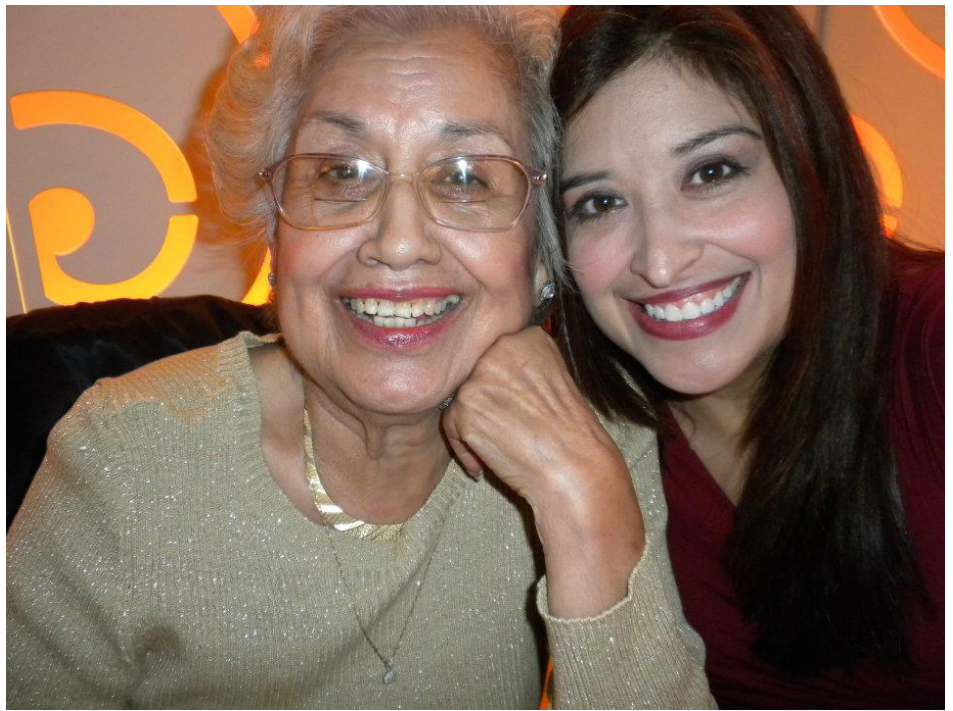


Valid at 2304 S. 77 Sunshine Strip. Harlingen, Texas 78550. Expires December 31, 2023.

# From The Editor

This is Lisa from Explore Harlingen. Welcome to the third issue of the Explore Harlingen Magazine: A Local's Guide to Harlingen, an entertainment magazine about Harlingen, Texas! I was born and raised in Harlingen but lived in bigger cities in Texas for college and career. I moved back to Harlingen from Austin in October 2013 when my

daughter was born. I have been blogging about my hometown of Harlingen, Texas for 10 years. Over the past decade, 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)).



But 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](https://www.instagram.com/exploreharlingen)). In this issue, I am highlighting local shopping establishments, a summary of new businesses that came to Harlingen in 2023, Christmas concerts and activities, and more. The Explore Harlingen Magazine is available digitally on my website at [www.exploreharlingenblog.com/magazine](http://www.exploreharlingenblog.com/magazine). Or you can pick up a

copy at the first of every month locally around town. I always enjoy this time of year; however, it is bittersweet without my parents. We miss them so much. But we will continue to honor their memories by being kind and giving to others. I hope you have a safe and blessed holiday, surrounded by loved ones. ♦

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FAMILY FRIENDLY  
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# On The Cover

# Shop Local this Christmas



Photo: Bullrider

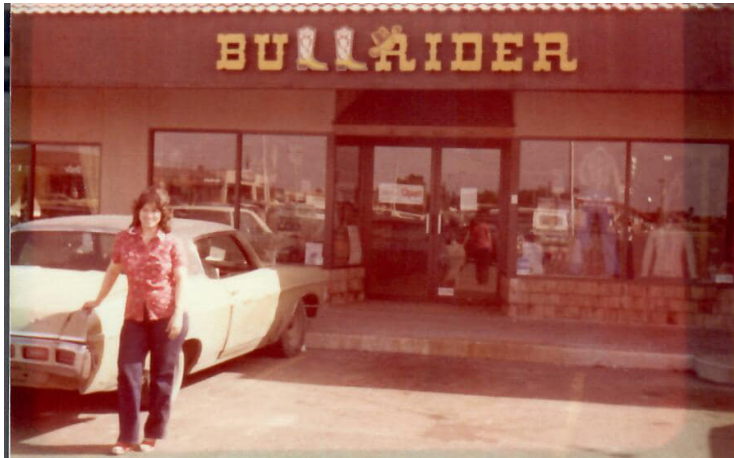


Photo: Bullrider

By Lisa Campos

This Christmas, think of local businesses when you are crossing items off your gift list. Harlingen has so many family-run shops and stores that sometimes struggle to survive, with the convenience of big box retailers and online shopping becoming more and more prevalent.

One store that has

been in business in Harlingen for a remarkable 44 years by the Meade family is Bullrider Western Wear. They have sold western classics and modern fashions at their Harlingen location on 1606 S. 77 Sunshine Strip since 1979. This family-owned and -operated store features western wear for the entire family, including brands



Photo: Cita's Boutique

such as Justin, Tony Lama, Ariat, Stetson, Lucchese, and more. They also provide hat shaping, hat cleaning, and felt hat restoration, in addition to boot stretching.

Kymerly Meade owns the store next door, Cita's Boutique. Cita's is an upscale women's clothing store with three locations in Harlingen and Brownsville, and just opened their third location in Weslaco. They feature brands such as Kendra Scott, Johnny Was, Brighton, and Vera Bradley.

Both Bullrider and Cita's are great options for local shopping. Additionally, here

is a list of locally owned stores that would appreciate your business this holiday season:

## Antique Shops

### **A Little Bit of Something**

100 S. 3rd Street  
956-357-5854

### **The Antique Emporium**

123 E. Jackson  
956-423-4041

### **Antiques & Collectibles**

108 E. Jackson  
956-536-0033

### **Down Home Market**

105 W. Jackson  
956-463-6469

### **Funky Fox Antiques**

109 W. Jackson  
956-622-1093

**Harlingen Antique Mall**

115 W. Jackson  
956-230-4529

**Jackson Street Antiques**

218 W. Jackson  
956-423-4300

**Clothing and Accessories Stores**

**Agape**

218 E. Jackson  
956-496-2348

**Black Lotus Boutique**

109 N. 3rd Street  
956-226-2826

**Blush Boutique**

19591 FM 508  
956-556-6636

**Bullrider Western Wear**

1606 S. 77 Sunshine Strip  
956-425-7291

**Callez/Girls by Callez**

222 E. Jackson  
956-244-1430

**Chic Stitch**

2305 E. Harrison Ave.  
956-933-7599

**Cita's Boutique**

1606 S. 77 Sunshine Strip, Suite C  
956-412-4055

**The Hive**

207 W. Jackson  
956-793-6432

**Honey Bees Boutique**

2323 N. Ed Carey Drive, Unit 1

**Hummingbird Valley Boutique and Gift Shoppe**

2020 S. Expressway 83  
956-230-4808

**Kassy's Wild Kreations**

801 E. Tyler Ave. Ste D  
956-622-6244

**KK's Closet**

712 N. 77 Sunshine Strip, Suite 2  
956-244-5545

**LALA**

212 E. Jackson  
512-538-8662

**Luxe Boutique**

117 E. Jackson  
956-564-9915

**Marie Rae Boutique**

1325 S. 77 Sunshine Strip, Suite 6  
956-425-4933

**Ofe's Mexican Boutique**

1046 N. 77 Sunshine Strip, Suite 1  
956-577-7463

**Scorpio's Closet**

712 N. 77 Sunshine Strip #32  
956-245-1599

**Shop Frida Frida**

3609 Business U.S.-83  
956-451-2949

**Southern Chics**

**Boutique**  
1212 E Harrison Ste 182

**Sweet Southern Bella's Boutique**

103 W. Jackson

**The Velvet Hanger Boutique**

207 W. Jackson  
956-734-5081

**Vintage on Jackson**

101 E. Jackson  
956-230-5697

**Comics and Collectibles**

**The Card Shop**

209 E. Jackson

**J&V's Toys Games and More**

1005 W. Harrison  
956-998-1003

**Olympus Cards and Comics**

960 S. 77 Sunshine Strip  
956-230-5750

**Quinn Comics**

805 Dixieland Road  
956-622-3033

**Gift Shops**

**4 Dogs Roasting**

102 W. Jackson  
956-230-1048

**Bloomer's Boutique & Floral Designs**

2001 S. 23rd Street  
956-425-2500

**Edith's Elegant Candles**

901 W. Jackson, Ste D

**For the Love of Paper**

1110 E. Harrison  
956-423-9307

**Herbin Wellness Apothecary + Tea Bar**

801 E. Tyler  
956-254-6818



Photo: Cita's Boutique



Photo: Bullrider

**Home Sweet Harlingen**  
212 E. Jackson  
512-538-8662

**Harlingen Bazaar**  
112 W. Jackson  
956-792-0695

**Jade Candle Company**  
602 W. Harrison

**Mad Kat Custom Designs**  
124 W. Jackson  
956-291-7350

**Mevale Creations LLC**  
119 E. Jackson  
956-230-1765

**Natalie's Gifts and More**  
608 E. Harrison Ave.  
956-496-2093

**Paper Lilies**  
105 E. Jackson, Suite A

**Pixie Friend Glitters**  
221 E. Jackson  
956-778-2495

**Procured Life + Home**  
413 W. Van Buren  
956-230-0678

**Quips and Quotes**  
709 N. 77 Sunshine Strip  
956-425-4647

**Stitch Gallery**  
113 S. 77 Sunshine Strip  
956-412-3087

**Whole Life Wellness Center**  
401 E. Filmore  
956-412-3745

**Jewelry Stores**

**Alexandre's Fine Jewelry**  
202 E. Jackson Street  
956-425-8831

**Gold Works Shop**  
2020 S. Expressway 83 (Valle Vista Mall)  
956-542-2203

**Irresistible Jewelry**  
712 N. 77 Sunshine Strip #1  
956-264-3207

**Jewelry Center**  
2020 S. Expressway 83 (Valle Vista Mall)  
956-365-4544

**The Jewelry & Gun Connection**  
1214 E. Tyler  
956-364-3030

**Oro Valle**  
2020 S. Expressway 83 (Valle Vista Mall)  
956-425-9495

**Portillo**  
2020 S. Expressway 83 (Valle Vista Mall)  
956-428-0087

**Ranee's Jewels**  
210 E. Jackson  
956-357-4742

**Roberts Jewelry**  
216 E. Jackson  
956-423-4406

**Massage and Spas**

**Desiree's Spa and Massage**  
1921 E. Harrison Ave.  
956-425-3303

**Distinguished Gentlemen's Spa**  
2413 Haine Drive  
956-230-0466



*Photo: Cita's Boutique*

**Elite Therapeutics of South Texas**  
1104 S. 77 Sunshine Strip  
956-793-9989

**Greater Therapeutics**  
25406 Beckham Road  
956-363-9746

**Healing Touch Massage**  
632 S. Ed Carey Drive, Suite 700  
956-367-5397

**Jorian Jareds Massage Spa**  
1000 Camelot Drive, Suite A  
956-367-6254

**Massage by Lily**  
722 Morgan, Suite W  
956-456-4592

**Massage by Shawn**  
401 E. Filmore  
956-357-3150

**The Salon at Optimal Wellness**  
3701 W. Business 83  
956-444-0002

**Silva's Soothing Massage**  
401 E. Filmore  
956-425-9955

**Spa La Posada**  
1205 E. Tyler  
956-412-6363

**Pet Supplies**

**Harlingen Pets**  
1305 N. 77 Sunshine Strip  
956-425-8488

**Paw Pantry**  
707 N. 77 Sunshine Strip  
956-412-7297

**Sugar and Hayley's Harness Wear**  
221 E. Jackson  
956-226-1462



**Specialty Stores**

**Bicycle World**

1113 S. 77 Sunshine Strip

956-423-3168

**El Coyote Custom Leather**

108 W. Jackson

956-373-5600

**House of Frames**

212 W. Jackson

956-423-8282; cell

956-374-5320

**Thrift Shops**

**Army Surplus Supply Co.**

306 W. Jackson

956-423-4028

**Goodwill**

1101 N. Ed Carey Dr

956-365-9989

**Salvation Army**

**Family Thrift Store**

114 E. Jackson Street

956-425-5553

**Sparrows Sip and Thrift**

406 E. Harrison

956-230-0697

**Texas Thrift**

813 N. 13th Street, Suite 25A

956-425-8900

**Holiday Markets**

Several downtown Harlingen businesses are hosting a Holiday Sip and Shop on December 7, from 5 pm to 8 pm, on Jackson Street. This is a great opportunity to shop downtown

Harlingen merchants in the evening, while enjoying light refreshments.

The Moon Rock Food Truck Park, located at 1811 W. Jefferson Ave. will host a Christmas Market, organized by Edith's Elegant Candles, on December 9, from 7 pm to 10 pm. You can enjoy live music, food trucks, a photo with Santa, and shopping with local vendors.

Lastly, Downtown Harlingen hosts a monthly Downtown at Sundown event on the third Saturday of every

month. On December 16, they will have local vendors lined up on Jackson Street and a special appearance by Santa.

Shopping local is more than just a hashtag; it keeps money in our local economy and helps the families that run them sustain their businesses and grow. Wouldn't it be wonderful if all small shops could thrive in Harlingen for 44 years, like Bullrider? With your help, they can. ♦

**Cita's**  
boutique  
HARLINGEN • BROWNSVILLE • WESLACO

KENDRA SCOTT    JON HART

CONSUELA    Brighton.

**Cita's Harlingen**  
1606 S 77 Sunshine Strip | Harlingen, TX 78550 | 956-412-4055

**Cita's Brownsville**  
3340 Pablo Kisel Blvd B-106 | Brownsville, TX 78526 | 956-621-2140

**Cita's Weslaco**  
602 E Interstate 2, Suite 103 | Weslaco, Texas 78596 | 956-375-2027

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WESTERN WEAR

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RIOS of MERCEDES  
CUSTOM BOOTS

ARIAT

ANDERSON BEAN BOOT COMPANY

1606 S. 77 SUNSHINE STRIP  
HARLINGEN, TEXAS 78550  
956-425-7291



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# COLLETTI'S

Italian Restaurant



Everything was fabulous Tell her THANK YOU for accommodating us after hours. That made everything so much more special. We love it there. It's our go to place. We spend all our Valentine's & anniversaries there. Colletti is really special to us. Jo has no idea how special she is to us. She doesn't know us and she has a special place in our heart. Her staff is also the best. They always treat us so wonderful & great us whether they're serving us or not. They treat you like family. That's what makes Colletti's so awesome! Being in the restaurant feels like I'm eating at home in my dining room. There's so much love there

♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥



**202 S 1st St | (956) 423-3140**  
**BUSINESS HOURS**

SUNDAY & MONDAY	CLOSED
TUESDAY - THURSDAY	11 AM - 8 PM
FRIDAY	11 AM - 9 PM
SATURDAY	5 - 9 PM

# Serving Deliciousness with a Side of Kindness:

## Panchito's Restaurant



Photo: Panchito's Restaurant

By Lisa Campos

Panchito's, owned by Jeanie Deleon Diaz, has been serving the Rio Grande Valley since 2001. They are a single location, family-owned, curbside-only restaurant serving breakfast and lunch. Their food is made with the finest, locally sourced ingredients, keeping their money in our community. Customer favorites include: fideo loco

and the botana for two (2) featuring nachos, fajitas, smoked sausage, quesadillas, and all the fixings. But they don't just serve Mexican food. They also feature croissant sandwiches, southwest chicken wraps made with homemade spinach tortillas, chicken and dumplings, broccoli cheese soup, lasagna soup with garlic toast, and more.

When other restaurants shut down

during the pandemic, Panchito's switched to curbside only. They continue to serve customers curbside exclusively, to ensure the health and wellness of their 74-year-old grandmother, who is the cook.

When Ms. Diaz's grandfather was alive, he would grace Panchito's with a weekly visit. Although Ms. Diaz would never accept payment for his food, even when he

insisted, stammering, "business is business." Her response would be, "family is everything."

In his honor, Panchito's provides and takes care of the older generation in the Harlingen community by offering free delivery. Panchito's delivered warm, delicious food to my parents when they were older and no longer able to drive, and my family truly appreciated it.



Photo: Panchito's Restaurant



*Photo: Panchito's Restaurant*

Ms. Diaz is such a wonderful and giving person who constantly lifts others up with her generosity and positive vibes. Even after facing adversity such as frequent vandalizations, reduction in staff, and a stage 4 cancer diagnosis for Ms. Diaz's sister, the Diaz family continues to give back to the community.

With Cam's Blessing Box, they have helped others in the following ways:

- Recycled more than 4,000 pounds of aluminum, paper, and plastics
- Raised more than \$4,000 and donated it to nonprofits with their annual Made with Love bake sale
- Collected and distributed more than

- 50 coats in 2022
  - During the pandemic, collected and distributed more than 20 pounds of food
  - Held a toy drive benefiting their neighbors to the south
  - Collected and donated more than 300 books, which has grown into a reading buddy program
- Additionally, Panchito's started a community give back program called Share the Love, which provides:

- Free drinks for military and law enforcement
- Free meals to those in

- need
  - Free meals for cancer warriors
  - Free meals for veterans on Veterans' Day
- Panchito's, located at 1021 S. Commerce, is open Monday through Friday, from 7 am to 1 pm, and Saturday, from 8 am to 1 pm, for curbside service only. Breakfast is served all day and lunch can be served as early as 9 am. Call them at 956-428-8083 to place your order. When you arrive in the parking lot, you will be greeted outside, and your meal will be brought out to your car. ♦



*Photo: Panchito's Restaurant*

# Introducing: Ask The Life Coach

**Q: I have a full-time job that pays the bills. But I also have a side gig that I am more passionate about. It doesn't make as much money. How should I prioritize my time? Should I make a choice between the two?**

**A:** Knowing when you can leave your day job for your passion project all depends on the numbers. You must decide the minimum amount of money you would need to make to let the secure job go. Make sure to consider health insurance as well. Private insurance can be costly, so do some price shopping as part of costing out all your monthly AND annual bills like flood insurance, vehicle registration, pet vaccinations, etc.

Until your side gig brings in the revenue you need to survive, you need to make sure you are committed to your primary job. Don't let it slip. As more revenue comes in from your business, perhaps you

can have a discussion with your employer about cutting down on hours, so you have more time to commit to your business. Until then, you'll need to run your business on your own time (on weekends and after hours).

Sometimes we find that we can't do it all and a tough decision needs to be made. Consider hiring someone to help you run your business. Maybe it's a matter of having someone to do your marketing so you can free up some time. Sure, there will be less money in your pocket right now, but it will also help your business grow, ultimately allowing you to quit your day job and focus solely on running your business.

Here's wishing you much success! —Coach Remi

Submit your questions to [remi@renovatedrealities.com](mailto:remi@renovatedrealities.com) with Explore Harlingen Magazine in the subject by December 13 to be included in the next edition. Recommended topics: Career Pivots,

Life-Work Balance, Self-Care, Goals, Small Business Development, Finding Yourself, Living a Happier Life. Remi Gibbs is a Certified Life Coach and Positive Psychology Practitioner with a master's degree in organizational management. She is a co-host of the podcast Conversations on Life, Work, and Love. Remi runs workshops and retreats and coaches people 1:1 both in



**Photo: Remi Gibbs**

Harlingen and online. Her goal is to help as many people as she can live their best life. She uses a science-based, holistic approach to coaching. For more information visit [www.renovatedrealities.com](http://www.renovatedrealities.com). ♦

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Serving the RGV and beyond

# Creating Continuous Creative Culture



*Hundreds of People enjoying art from Local vendors at “Harlingen Art Night” on “A” Street. Photo: Lisa Campos*

***By Steven Hughes***

The last Friday of each month on “A” Street in Harlingen is home to a routine created by creatives to bring people closer to different arts. It’s called Harlingen Art Night, and it’s a monthly arts appreciation event highlighting local vendors.

“I think it is an opportunity for

anybody to come out and showcase their art,” Souther Recio, owner of Cactus Valley Art & Supply Co. on Van Buren Avenue in Harlingen, said over the phone. “It’s an opportunity for our community, neighbors, to meet one another.”

Harlingen Art Night brings hundreds of people to see and shop for fine art, candles, and stones. More than



*Photo: Lisa Campos*

20 vendors set up from sunset to dark (7 pm to 10 pm), while local art studios and bars stay open for Art Night goes to visit.

Many characters visit Harlingen Art Night: from local actors dressed in costume for the Harlingen Community Theatre Wizard of Oz production to promote the performances to vendors selling pinned insects and folks dressing as memes on Halloween weekend.

“Watching the vendors progress and seeing their growth in confidence ... it’s just nice to see their growth in their determination and talent,” Mia Garza, the co-organizer for Harlingen Art Night said over the phone. “Once you start selling, it’s validating and inspires artists to create more.”

Since its inception nearly 10 years ago in January 2014, Harlingen Art Night has evolved and opened doors for a community to establish new small businesses. In fact, the Harlingen Economic Development



**Local Artist. Photo: Lisa Campos**

Corporation recently noted that Site Selection magazine named Harlingen as one of the Top 50 Best Small Cities for Small Business in the United States.

“I have a wide variety of clientele,” Salma de Leon, owner of Little Lami’s

Shop who has been a Harlingen Art Night vendor approximately 50 times, said over the phone. “I’ve had more people come up to me at Art Night than any other place I’ve been to and it’s returning customers.”

Harlingen Art Night occurs on the last

Friday of the month from 7 pm to 10 pm on “A” Street between Jackson and Monroe. Vendors sign up online via Google forms and pay a \$5 fee in person for their spot. Contact Harlingen Art Night on Instagram (@harlingenartnight) for more information. ♦



See “Shop Local this Christmas” and “Celebrating Christmas in Harlingen” articles for more Christmas events.

Events subject to change.

### **Recurring Events**

#### **Market Days**

First Saturday (December 2), 9am to 3pm  
Jackson Street and Centennial Plaza

#### **The Market at Wild August Nursery and Flower Farm**

Every Saturday (December 2, 9, and 16),  
9:30 am to 1 pm 16802 Garrett Road

#### **Harlingen Farmers Market**

Every Saturday (December 2, 9, 16, 23,  
and 30), 3 pm to 4:30 pm 2nd Street and  
Tyler Ave

#### **Harlingen Elks Lodge Indoor Market**

Every 3rd Saturday (December 16), 9 am  
to 1 pm 1426 S. Commerce

#### **Downtown at Sundown**

Every 3rd Saturday (December 16), 7 pm  
to 10 pm Jackson Street

#### **Harlingen Art Night**

Last Friday (December 29), 7 pm to 10  
pm “A” Street and Jackson

### **December Special Events**

#### **Holiday Mixer**

December 1, 2 pm to 6 pm Valley  
Aesthetics

#### **Christmas Parade**

December 1, 6 pm to 10 pm Downtown  
Harlingen

#### **2nd Annual Dominick’s Day**

December 2, 11 am to 3:30 pm Harlingen  
Convention Center

#### **Harlingen Concert Association presents a Christmas Concert with “Jingle Belles”**

December 5, 7:30 pm Christian  
Fellowship Church Auditorium

#### **Harlingen Police Department Shop with a Cop**

December 6, 8:30 am Target

#### **Holiday Sip and Shop**

December 7, 5 pm to 8 pm Jackson St

#### **Christmas Tree Extravaganza 2023 Opening reception**

December 7, 6 pm to 8 pm Exhibit runs  
December 5 through January 5 Harlingen  
Arts & Heritage Museum

#### **Chorus RGV Comfort & Joy (ticketed event)**

December 7, 7:30 pm Harlingen  
Community Theatre

#### **Christmas Party with In Six Days**

December 8, 6 pm to 8 pm J&R Snack  
Bar

#### **Cinta de Oro Plantando Bandera (ticketed boxing event)**

December 8, Doors at 7 pm  
Harlingen Convention Center





### **Nativity Nights**

December 9, and 10, 5 pm to 8 pm St. Paul Lutheran Church

### **In Hymn Choir Christmas Concert**

December 9, 7 pm First Methodist Church

### **Christmas Market by Edith's Elegant Candles**

December 9, 7 pm to 10 pm The Moon Rock Food Truck Park

### **A Holiday Jubilee Strong Voices, A Christmas Musical Concert**

December 9, at 7 pm and 9 pm Don Gollito Restaurant

### **Always... Patsy Cline (ticketed musical)**

December 9-10, 16-17 Sat 7:30pm Sun 2:30pm Harlingen Community Theatre

### **Christmas Canticles, A Cantata of Carols in Four Suites**

December 10, 9am and 11am First Methodist Church

### **HSHP Christmas Concert**

December 11, 6 pm to 7:30 pm Harlingen School of Health Professions

### **Deck the Palms**

December 14, 4 pm to 6 pm Harlingen Public Library Courtyard

### **Fill the Jeep Toy Drive**

December 14, 7 pm to 10 pm Rockin' Cue

### **Pictures with Santa and Mrs. Claus**

December 15, 6pm to 8pm J&R Snack Bar

### **Grinchmas Breakfast**

December 16, 9 am to 11 am Chick-fil-A Sunshine Strip

### **Wreaths Across America**

December 16, 11 am Pendleton Park

### **Christmas Party with Toy Giveaway**

December 22, 5 pm to 8 pm J&R Snack Bar

### **Breakfast with Santa Cow**

December 23, 9 am to 11 am Chick-fil-A Sunshine Strip

### **Beyond Harlingen**

### **Christmas Market at T-Ranch**

December 3, 2 pm to 7 pm 25492 N. FM 2556, La Feria

### **20th Annual Christmas Parade and Lighting of Tree Event "A Country Christmas"**

December 9, 5 pm Combes Community Park

### **25th Annual Lighted Christmas Parade**

December 9, 6 pm Main Street, La Feria

### **Christmas at the Ranch (ticketed event)**

December 9, 16, 17, and 23, 4pm to 8pm Big Red's Ranch, San Benito

# 2023 Year in Review: Coffee, Restaurants, and More Places to Shop



*Photo: Lisa Campos*

**By Lisa Campos**

2023 was a big year for new businesses opening in Harlingen. Since January, I have been tracking and sharing new business openings on my Explore Harlingen community page on Facebook. Although the majority of

what I tracked were restaurants, Harlingen did see a few retailers open locations this year, with national chain, Academy Sports and Outdoors, as one of the biggest and most exciting store openings in recent Harlingen history. Their newly constructed location at 2831 W. Expressway

83 in the Harlingen Corners shopping center (next to Five Below), celebrated its grand opening weekend November 17-19, 2023, with its soft opening for friends and family starting on November 12, 5-9 pm.

Other new retailers that came to Harlingen this year included

Ollie's Bargain Outlet, a national discount closeout retailer, which opened on January 25 at Valle Vista Mall. Seasonal national store, Spirit Halloween, opened on August 12 at its temporary location at 1106 S. Expressway 83 and closed after Halloween.

Several coffee shops

opened in Harlingen this year, giving some healthy competition to Starbucks. Two national chains, Dutch Bros Coffee, which opened on June 30, and Scooter's Coffee, which opened on August 13, brought their well-known offerings to Harlingen. Dutch Bros demolished the building at 1601 W. Harrison to create their brand-new drive thru only shop, while Scooter's Coffee constructed a new building for their drive-thru only shop at 2304 S. 77 Sunshine Strip.

Additionally, several small coffee shops opened this year including:

- 4 Dogs Roasting, which offers coffee and tea accessories and gifts, opened on February 9 at 108 W. Jackson.
- Sovereign Coffee, of Brownsville, opened its second Rio Grande Valley (RGV) location in Harlingen on March 2 at 1733 S. 77 Sunshine Strip.
- Sparrows Sip & Thrift, a hybrid coffee shop and thrift store, opened in mid-August at 406 E. Harrison.

- Tora Coffee & Tea, of Brownsville, opened its second location in Harlingen on September 29 at 620 W. Van Buren Ave. In addition to coffee, Harlingen added several places for its residents to eat this year, including:

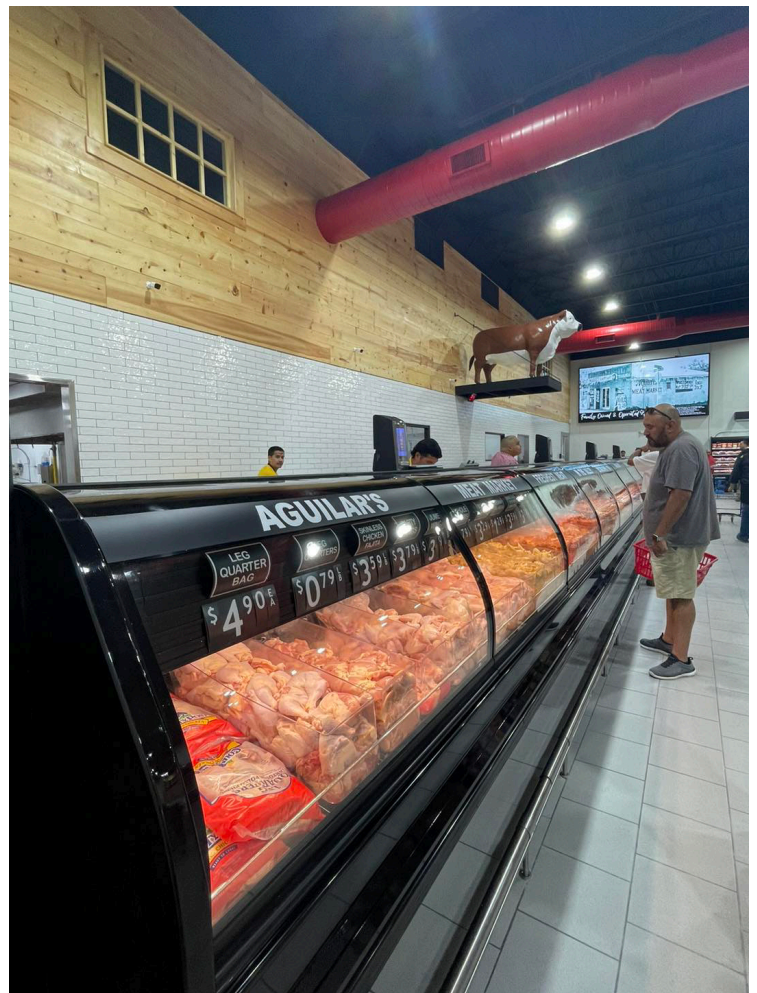
- Ricardo's Restaurant, which has several locations throughout the RGV, opened on March 13 at 3201 S. Expressway 83, Unit C.

- Jersey Mike's Subs, a national submarine sandwich shop, opened on March 22 at 2217 W. Lincoln.

- Brady's Grill, a locally owned restaurant from La Feria, moved to Harlingen on May 6 at 610 Lewis Lane (however, they have since moved to San Antonio).

- Mariscos Tulum, a Mexican seafood restaurant, opened on June 13 at 102 N. 77 Sunshine Strip.

- Papas & Papas, a restaurant featuring build-your-own potatoes and potato tacos, opened on August 9 at 6704 W. Expressway 83, Suite D108.



*Photo: Lisa Campos*

- Main Street Boutique & Bistro moved from San Benito to Harlingen on August 31 inside the El Mercado shopping center at 712 N. 77 Sunshine Strip, Suite 6.

- Wings and Rings, a national wing restaurant and bar, opened on September 25 at 6710 W Expressway 77/83.

- Harlingen's first gourmet donut shop, Sugarz Gourmet Donuts, located at 224 E. Jackson in downtown Harlingen,

held its soft opening on November 18.

The Moon Rock, Harlingen's food truck park at 1811 W. Jefferson Ave., saw the arrival of two new trucks this year: a gourmet sandwich truck, Hatter's Sammiches, which opened on August 16, and Teddy's Barbecue of Weslaco, which launched its Harlingen food truck on August 25.

A new local bar also opened in Harlingen this year. DRINK UP

# 2023

## Top Posts on Explore Harlingen on Facebook by Reach

74.2K

Mr. Gatti's coming back to Harlingen

44.1K

Opening date announcement, Academy Sports + Outdoors

40.0K

Cinemark 16 concession upgrade

Photo: Lisa Campos

is a woman-owned bar that serves specialty cocktails, beer, and snacks. It is located at 1226 Morgan Blvd., in the former Feldman's space.

The opening of Aguilar's Meat Market on October 5 was highly anticipated, as it had been in the works for close to three years. This market boasts "the freshest meat in the Valley," and sells fresh produce, groceries, barbecue supplies, and more. It is located at 4226 S. Expressway 83.

Stefano's Brooklyn

Pizza, which burned down in December 2021, has spent the past two years rebuilding their location at 4201 W. Business 83. Their highly awaited reopening is expected to occur before the end of 2023.

Our neighbors in Combes and Primera also saw some new businesses, including a Love's Country Store with a Godfather's Pizza inside, which opened on April 24 in Combes and a new Dollar Tree at Stuart Place and Wilson,

which opened on April 29 for Primera residents.

Additional businesses are in the process of coming to Harlingen, possibly in 2024, including:

- Mr. Gatti's, which closed because of the pandemic, included Harlingen as an upcoming location on their website. Address and estimated opening date are yet to be announced.

- A simulated indoor golf course and bar called The Deep End at 8311 Business 83, is in the construction phase.

- Cajun restaurant and bar, Walk-On's Sports Bistreaux (near Bass

Pro in the Cameron Crossing shopping center), is preparing for groundbreaking.

- Black Bear Diner, a homestyle and old-fashioned comfort food café, is coming to 6706 W. Expressway 83.

- Murdoch's Ranch & Home Supply will occupy the space formerly occupied by Dillard's department store at Valle Vista Mall.

I will continue to track these new businesses and others as they are announced, on my Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/ExploreHarlingen](http://www.facebook.com/ExploreHarlingen). ♦



Photo: Lisa Campos

# Event Spotlight

# Celebrating Christmas in Harlingen

By Lisa Campos

'Tis the season for pictures with Santa, parades, Christmas trees, church programs, holiday music, and much more. Harlingen has many activities for you to enjoy with loved ones this holiday season.

Santa arrived at the Bass Pro Shops, located at 101 Bass Pro Drive in Harlingen, on November 4, but is available for a free 4x6 photo through December 24. You can make a reservation for your picture with Santa on the Bass Pro website, [www.basspro.com/shop/en/santas-wonderland](http://www.basspro.com/shop/en/santas-wonderland). While there, children can also write a letter to Santa and mail it from the store.

The City of Harlingen's Christmas parade, which falls on the first Friday in December, occurs on December 1 from 6 pm to 10 pm in

## HCISD Fine Arts Holiday Schedule

<i>Events at HCISD Performing Arts Center</i>	<i>Campus Community Concerts</i>
November 28 <sup>th</sup> - Vela MS Band Concert 6:00 PM • Free	November 16 <sup>th</sup> - Harlingen HS Band Christmas Concert at HHS Cafeteria 6:00 PM • Free
November 29 <sup>th</sup> - Coakley MS Symphonic and Honor Band Concert 6:00 PM • Free	December 5 <sup>th</sup> - Vernon MS World Languages Academy IB World School Orchestra and Choir Concert at Vernon Gym 6:00 PM • Free
December 4 <sup>th</sup> - Guiterrez Middle School of Arts & Sciences Band Concert 6:00 PM • Free	December 6 <sup>th</sup> - Coakley MS Choir: Carols @ Cookies at Coakley MS Band Hall 5:30pm • Free
December 5 <sup>th</sup> - Guiterrez Middle School of Arts & Sciences Choir Concert 5:30 PM • Free	December 8 <sup>th</sup> - Memorial Band Concert at Memorial Gym 6:00 PM • Free
December 5 <sup>th</sup> - HHS Choir Concert 7:00 PM • Free	December 12 <sup>th</sup> - Vernon MS World Languages Academy IB World School 6th Grade Band Concert at Vernon Gym 5:30 PM • Free
December 6 <sup>th</sup> - Harlingen HS South Band Concert 7:00 PM • Free	December 12 <sup>th</sup> - Memorial Orchestra Concert at Memorial Gym 6:30 PM • Free
December 15 <sup>th</sup> /16 <sup>th</sup> - *The Nutcracker @ 7:00 PM	
December 19 <sup>th</sup> - *The Nutcracker @ 2:30 PM	December 14 <sup>th</sup> - Guiterrez Middle School of Arts & Sciences Guitar Ensemble at Harlingen Arts & Heritage Museum 6:00 PM • Free
December 18 <sup>th</sup> - Vela MS Orchestra Concert 6:00 PM • Free	December 19 <sup>th</sup> - Coakley Orchestra Concert at Coakley Gym 5:00pm • Free
December 18 <sup>th</sup> - HHS South Orchestra Concert 7:00 PM • Free	December 19 <sup>th</sup> - Vernon MS World Languages Academy IB World School 7th and 8th Grade Concert at Vernon Gym 6:30pm • Free
December 19 <sup>th</sup> - Vela MS Choir Concert 5:30 PM • Free	
December 19 <sup>th</sup> - Harlingen HS South Choir Concert 7:00 PM • Free	
December 20 <sup>th</sup> - Guiterrez Middle School of Arts & Sciences Orchestra Concert 5:30 PM • Free	
December 20 <sup>th</sup> - Harlingen HS Orchestra Concert 7:00 PM • Free	



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\*To purchase Nutcracker tickets visit [rwww.hcisdpa.org](http://rwww.hcisdpa.org)

downtown Harlingen. This year's theme is A Texas Christmas. The parade starts on West

Street and finishes on 6th Street. Additionally, the Harlingen Arts and

Heritage Museum at 2425 Boxwood Street, will have its annual Christmas

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Tree Extravaganza beginning on December 5, 2023 through January 5, 2024. It is a display of different Christmas trees decorated by the community. The opening reception will be on December 7,

from 6 pm to 8 pm, at the museum.

The following is a list of additional holiday events in Harlingen this December:

### Church Festivities

The Harlingen Concert Association

presents a Christmas Concert with “Jingle Belles” on December 5, at 7:30 pm at the Christian Fellowship Church Auditorium, 901 N. Loop 499.

St. Paul Lutheran Church hosts their annual Nativity

nights on two nights, December 9, and 10, from 5 pm to 8 pm. This event features a live action manger scene, free food, and more.

In Hymn Choir will have its Christmas concert, “I’ll Be Home for Christmas,” on December 9 at 7 pm at First Methodist Church, 123 E. Harrison. A reception will follow. Tickets are \$8 and will be sold at the door.

Additionally, First Methodist Church choir will have two performances of Christmas Canticles, A Cantata of Carols in Four Suites, on December 10, from 9 am to 12 noon.

### Concerts and Caroling

The Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District (HCISD) has a full calendar of upcoming band and choir concerts at various middle schools and high schools throughout the month of December. HCISD Performing Arts Center’s production of the Nutcracker will have performances on

December 15 and 16 at 7 pm and December 17 at 2:30 pm.

Chorus of the Rio Grande Valley is having its annual holiday concert on December 7 at 7:30 pm at the Harlingen Community Theatre, 1209 Fair Park Blvd. Tickets are \$25 for reserved seating and \$20 for general admission. Tickets will be available at the door.

J&R Snack Bar is hosting a Christmas party with carols and songs by band In Six Days on December 8 from 6 pm to 8 pm. They are located at 602 W. Harrison.

Don Gollito Restaurant, 417 W. Van Buren,

is set to host two performances of “A Holiday Jubilee Strong Voices, A Christmas Musical Concert,” on December 9, at 7 pm and 9 pm.

Harlingen School of Health Professions will host a band, choir, and orchestra ensemble concert on December 11, 6 pm to 7:30 pm, at 2302 N. 1st Street.

### **For the Kids**

The Harlingen Public Library is hosting a Winter Celebration “Deck the Palms” on December 14 from 4 pm to 6 pm. This event includes food, games, performances, vendors, and pictures with Santa.

J&R Snack Bar

at 602 W. Harrison is having two events on December 15 from 6 pm to 8 pm and December 22 from 5 pm to 8 pm. On December 15, children can take pictures with Santa and Mrs. Claus. On December 22, they will have another opportunity to take pictures with Santa while participating in a toy giveaway.

Chick-fil-A Sunshine Strip will host two morning events for children: Grinchmas,

December 16, 9 am to 11 am and Breakfast with Santa Cow, December 23, 9 am to 11 am. Costumed characters will make appearances for photo opportunities. They are located at 1814 S. 77 Sunshine Strip.

Other holiday events may be announced as Christmas draws closer. Please check my Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/ExploreHarlingen](http://www.facebook.com/ExploreHarlingen) for the latest information. ♦



## Notable Nonprofits

# RGVHS: Saving Lives, One Animal at a Time



Photo: RGVHS

By Lisa Campos

The Rio Grande Valley Humane Society (RGVHS) is a non-profit 501(c)3, community animal shelter based in Harlingen, with a second location in Mission. RGVHS serves more than 6,000 animals each year, either brought in by municipal animal control officers or surrendered by local residents.

### A Leader Steps Down

The RGVHS Board

of Directors announced on November 20, 2023, that executive director Luis Quintanilla resigned after nearly four years in the position. Melissa Saldana has been appointed interim executive director.

Mr. Quintanilla came to RGVHS in February 2020 when the shelter, previously known as the Humane Society of Harlingen, used to euthanize 85 percent of the animals that came into the shelter. RGVHS board president, Lillian Cantu Kim

reflected, “His passion and commitment to the animals and the community transformed the animal shelter (in Harlingen) from a high-volume euthanasia shelter to a no-kill shelter.” Mrs. Kim continued, “This transformation is the legacy that he leaves behind. It won’t be forgotten.”

From February 21, 2020, through November 20, 2023, during Mr. Quintanilla’s tenure, RGVHS saved 10,719 homeless cats and dogs. Under Mr.

Quintanilla’s leadership, RGVHS has received national recognition due to the following accomplishments:

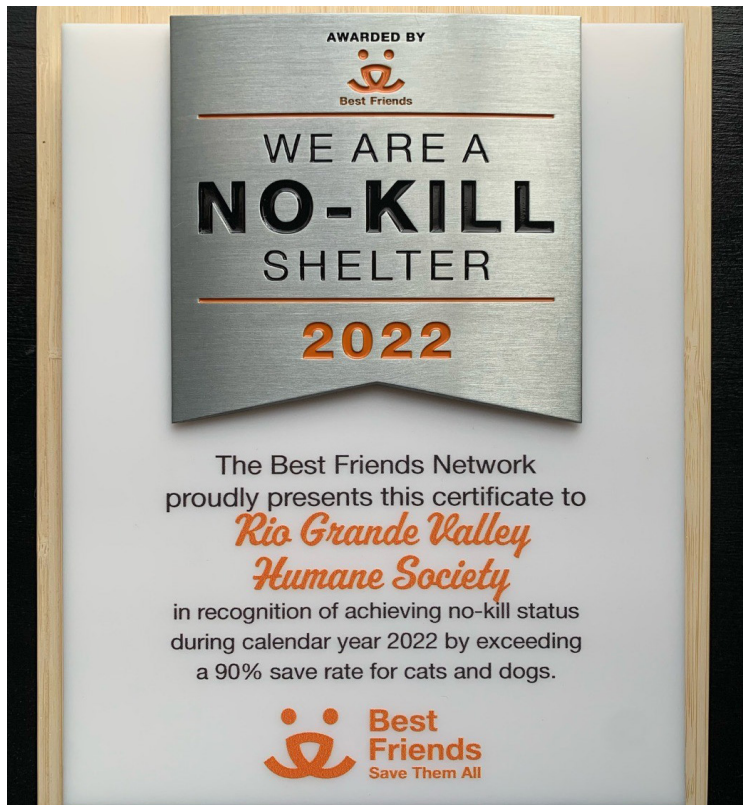
- Animal adoptions: 7,882
- Animals transferred to rescue partner: 3,888
- Animals reunited with owner: 1,520
- Community cats returned to field: 2,358
- Animals fostered: 5,948
- Spay/neuter surgeries performed: 8,783
- Animals served through monthly community clinics: 15,725
- Save rate for 2022: 94.3%
- Animals killed for space: 0

It is the RGVHS’ hope that they can continue to build upon the strong foundation that Mr. Quintanilla created as they move forward into 2024.

### Ways RGVHS Supports the Community

Currently, RGVHS hosts monthly community clinics at both their Harlingen





*Photo: RGVHS*

and Mission locations. At these clinics, RGV residents can receive discounted vaccinations and medications for their pets, such as rabies, Bordetella, dewormer, flea/tick preventative, heartworm preventative, and more.

Because spaying and neutering pets is strongly recommended to help limit the pet population, RGVHS provides low-cost spay and neutering services at a fraction of the cost that you would pay at a veterinary office.

### Ways the Community Can Support RGVHS

There are many ways that the community can

help RGVHS with their mission. Donations are always welcomed. You can drop off frequently needed items such as blankets, towels, dog and cat food, paper towels, and newspapers. Or you can donate a set amount every



*Photo: RGVHS*

month with the monthly giving program on their website, [www.rgvhs.org/956champions](http://www.rgvhs.org/956champions). Event sponsorships help the RGVHS continue its lifesaving efforts. The RGVHS' biggest fundraiser, the Wine and Whiskers gala, is set for April 6, 2024.

Additionally, RGVHS continuously needs fosters to help free up space at the shelter and place animals in homes, even if temporarily. They also accept volunteers. This past summer, my daughter volunteered weekly to read to the kittens at RGVHS. We became so enamored with the cats and kittens that we decided to foster-to-adopt a little brown tabby kitten named Cindy Clawford after our beloved dog had

passed away. We ultimately adopted Cindy, and she helped us tremendously with the grieving process with her loving yet spunky personality.

The RGVHS in Harlingen is located at 1106 Markowsky Ave., and is open 7 days a week, with extended hours of 11 am to 6 pm (regular business hours are 1 pm to 6 pm). You can contact them by phone at 956-428-1022, on their website ([rgvhs.org](http://rgvhs.org)), or via email, [harlingeninfo@rgvhs.org](mailto:harlingeninfo@rgvhs.org). The Mission location is at 227 Abelino Farias Street with the same hours. They can be contacted at 956-591-0058 or via email, [missioninfo@rgvhs.org](mailto:missioninfo@rgvhs.org). ♦



*Photo: RGVHS*



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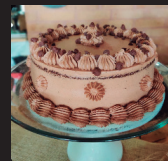
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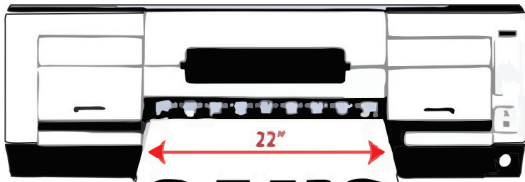
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# Basketball in Full Swing & Soccer Ramping Up

By Ruben Rodriguez  
La Feria News

## Harlingen High: Basketball Season Well Underway for Harlingen High

After a Lengthy offseason, Basketball season is in full swing for both Boys and Girls Basketball at Harlingen High.

Over the years, the girls basketball program has been very efficient under Head Coach Ashley Moncivaiz. Fresh off an unbeaten district championship season in 2022-23, the Lady Cardinals have found themselves in a rough patch.

Currently 3-8 in non-district play, Harlingen has put themselves

through the ringer, facing off against multiple teams from further up north in Texas. Their lone three wins, come against Houston Lamar, Seguin, and RGV Powerhouse Edinburg Vela.

With quite a ways to go in Non-District, the Lady Cardinals will continue to gear up on the path to 32-6A play, which is slated to begin in January.

Meanwhile, the Boys program continues to find the right groove. At 5-3 in the young season, the Cardinals have been able to pick up crucial wins when needed. After missing the postseason last season, the Cardinals are currently on the

right track as they continue to roll through non-district. So far, Harlingen has picked up big wins against Weslaco East, Mission and Austin Anderson.

Harlingen High will continue to prepare for 32-6A Play come January as they attempt to reach the playoffs for the first time since 2021-22.

## South Hawk Hoops

As Basketball Season is underway at Harlingen High, we look across town towards Harlingen South as the Hawks and Lady Hawks are knee deep into the 2023-24 Texas High School Basketball Season. As both programs are in their second year of 5A Play, here is what we have seen so far.

The Lady Hawks are currently battling out through non-district Play. Currently 7-6, Rebecca Littleton's squad has picked up big wins against San Antonio Jefferson, Mission Veterans and Eagle Pass. Despite

losing six games, the Harlingen South Girls have been tested as those six losses have come to state powerhouses such as Sam Houston, San Antonio O'Connor, San Antonio Southside, and 31-5A foe McAllen.

Meanwhile on the Boys' side of things, Brian Molina's Ball club has made quite the name for themselves in 5A action. After capturing the 32-5A District Title, the Hawks have had quite the battles this season, against Rio Grande City, McAllen and Corpus Christi Veterans Memorial. Looking to continue their momentum, the Hawks still have a few key matchups in Non-District Play.

Being part of one of the two largest districts in the Rio Grande Valley, both programs have a handful of games before the 18-Game District Schedule begins in early December.



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## Harlingen Soccer on the Horizon

As we turn the calendar into December, we also turn the calendar into a new season. The 2023-24 UIL Soccer Season is just around the corner with both boys and girls beginning their first practices of the year, we begin to look at what to expect for both teams.

The Harlingen High programs are ready to roll heading into this season. Looking at the boys program, the Cardinals certainly had quite the run in 2022-23. After finishing in third in District, the Cardinals were able to punch their ticket to the regional quarterfinal, where they fell to District Rival Brownsville Rivera.

On the girls side of things, the Lady Cardinals were able to capture 32-6A Gold. Just like the boys,

the Lady Cardinals reached the Regional Quarterfinals, where they were defeated by O'Connor in a nail-biter.

Both teams will face off in tournaments, as well as several non-district matchups before district begins in Mid February. The Lady Cardinals will begin their season a mere few days after New Year's Day.

A lot is expected for Harlingen soccer in 2023-24. With both teams coming off good runs in the playoffs, Harlingen will have to go through a lengthy non-district and competitive 32-6A schedule before playoffs can come to mind.

### The Hawks Set for Valley Soccer

As we near December, we also near the start of the 2023-24 UIL Soccer Season. Across town, the

Harlingen South Boys and Girls are eager, excited, and ready to begin the season.

Firstly, the Boys seem more eager to begin the season and forget about 2022-23. In their first year under 5A Classification, the Hawks struggled and couldn't find a groove soon enough. Harlingen South towards the end of the season picked up three straight wins, but it was not enough. The Hawks would finish District in fifth and miss the playoffs entirely.

However, the girls program was able to find success in 2022-23. Under their first

year in 5A, the Lady Hawks soared in 32-5A play, finishing 15-1-1 in District and capturing the 32-5A Title in the process. What followed after was not what was expected as the Lady Hawks were stunned by McAllen Rowe in the Bi-District round, sending Harlingen South on an early exit.

This season, both programs look to avenge their 2022-23 as one team looks to make it to the playoffs for the first time in 5A play, while the other team looks to defend their title, while building and improving on the success of last season. ♦

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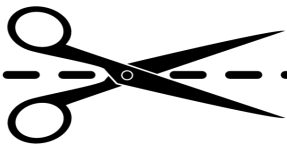


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