



Free Magazine

December 2025



Explore Harlingen
Magazine Online



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From the Editor



By Lisa Campos

This is Lisa from Explore Harlingen. Welcome to the 26th issue of the Explore Harlingen Magazine: A Local's Guide to Harlingen, an entertainment magazine about Harlingen, Texas!

For 12 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). I also have an online presence with my website, www.exploreharlingenblog.com, and social media accounts on Instagram and TikTok (@

exploreharlingen).

In this issue, we discuss annual event Wreaths Across America, 2025 year in review, various local Christmas events, and more.

The Explore Harlingen Magazine is available digitally on my website at 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). Additionally, you can contact Victor Moreno below to purchase a subscription, which allows you to receive the monthly magazine in the mail for a small fee. ♦

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For a full list of Explore Harlingen Magazine pick up locations and
addresses, see www.exploreharlingenblog.com/magazine.



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**On the
Cover**

A Wreath for Every Hero: Ashland Memorial Park Cemetery Continues Tradition to Honor Veterans

By Abigail Muñiz-Garcia

Evergreen wreaths of balsam fir adorned with a red, hand-tied bow are gently placed on veteran graves at Ashland Memorial Park Cemetery in Harlingen on the

second Saturday in December every year. The purpose? To honor and remember their service.

Last year more than 3 million wreaths were placed on veteran graves across the United States. The initiative, which informally started



Courtesy of Ashland Memorial Park Cemetery

in 1992 with Morrill Worcester, owner of Worcester Wreath Company of Maine, was named Wreaths Across America in 2007. The mission of the organization was established then. It is to remember, honor, and teach.

Diana Campbell, cemetery manager and location coordinator at Ashland Memorial Park Cemetery, says Ashland started participating eight years ago.

“We didn’t know anything about it until a lady with a veteran’s group here in Harlingen brought it up,” Campbell said.

Ever since then, the cemetery has joined the 4,900 others doing the same in partaking in this annual tradition.

This year, the event will take place on Saturday, December 13 at 10 am. The guest speaker will be the Honorable Judge David Sanchez of the



Courtesy of Ashland Memorial Park Cemetery



A veterans' wreath is a symbol of
HONOR, RESPECT, and VICTORY.

10 BALSAM BOUQUETS = **10** SPECIAL QUALITIES
comprising each veterans' wreath that our veterans embody



444th District Court of Cameron County. This day also happens to be "Wreaths Across America Day," which was unanimously voted

as such by the United States Congress in 2008.

For Campbell, it is especially meaningful since both her father

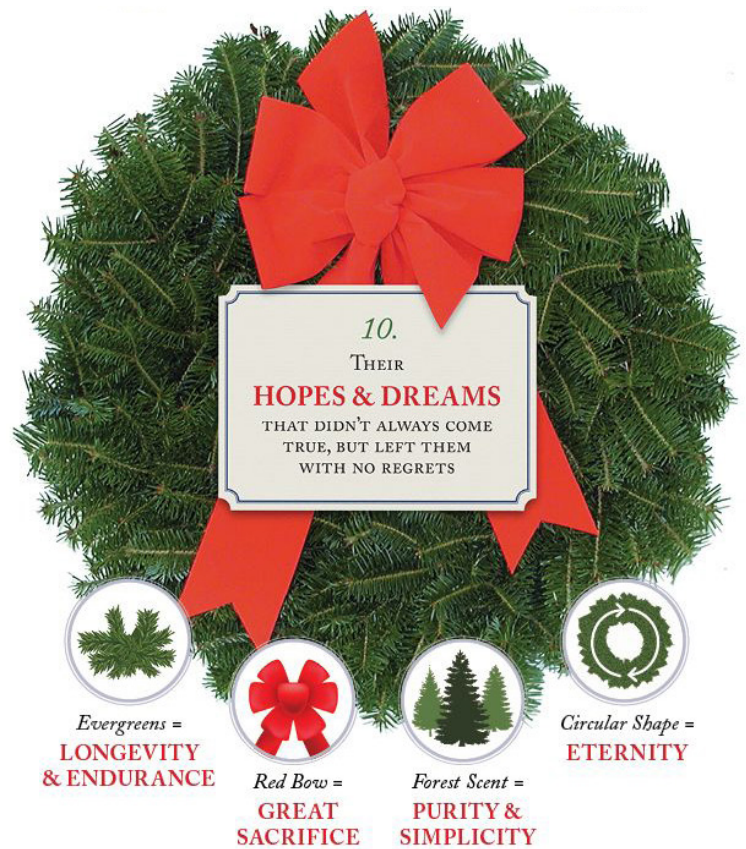
and husband are veterans.

"I am a daughter of a veteran and a wife of a veteran," she said. "It means a lot to me because my dad passed away three years ago, so three years ago was the first time I... was honored to know that my dad served our country and that the whole nation recognized him on that

day. Even though they didn't know his name, he was a veteran and he takes part of the honoring that day."

There are 222 veterans buried at Ashland. Campbell mentions that they are always looking for sponsors for the \$17 wreaths that are delivered from Maine every year.

Even the deliveries



"THIS YEAR, WHEN YOU PLACE A WREATH ON A VETERANS GRAVE, you will know it is not just a wreath. It's *your* personal gift to an American hero, and you'll swell with pride have a tear in your eye knowing you've done something special for our veterans and their families. God bless our veterans and God bless America."

—MORRELL WORCESTER, FOUNDER OF WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA

REMEMBER, HONOR, AND TEACH. Don't say you should have. Say you did.

OVER 900 LOCATIONS NATIONWIDE:



WATCH THE VIDEO AT bit.ly/veteranswreath



involve volunteers since volunteer drivers make the cross-country journey to various cemeteries and locations around the nation, dropping off millions of wreaths.

“It’s a big undertaking,” Campbell said.

She hopes the community knows that they too can get involved in this yearly event.

“They can attend the event,” she said. “They can come out here and help us lay wreaths on the graves... if they can’t donate for a wreath, they can donate their time and just come be with us.”



Courtesy of Ashland Memorial Park Cemetery

Campbell mentions that there are graves that don’t get visited anymore due to aging relatives or perhaps because their family is

long since gone.

“There are veterans that don’t have families that come visit them... there’s no flowers, nobody’s come to see them in a while, and even if just once a year, that veteran can have something, it’s all worth it,” Campbell said.

For more information, please visit Ashland Memorial

Park Cemetery on Facebook and to sponsor a wreath you can scan the QR code.♦



Courtesy of Ashland Memorial Park Cemetery

MERRY CHRISTMAS

from all of us at the Harlingen Elks Lodge 1889



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For Dates & Times

THE NIGHT
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CHRISTMAS BAZAAR 2025

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TOWN! GIRLGANG'S CHRISTMAS
BAZAAR IS GOING TO
HARLINGEN, TEXAS!

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WHERE: HARLINGEN
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TIME: 5PM-10PM

DATE: SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21ST

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Something
More...

Collect and
Connect with

the Magic Valley Stamp Club

By Lisa Campos

Established in 1947, the Magic Valley Stamp Club offers stamp collectors (also known as Philatelists) a space to share their love of stamps with others who share the same interest. Philatelists from the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) and Winter Texan visitors meet in Harlingen once a month from September through May to promote stamp collecting for people of all ages.

Magic Valley
STAMP CLUB



Courtesy of Magic Valley Stamp Club

Members can network with other stamp collectors, hear guest speakers talk about topics related to stamp collecting, learn more about grading and categorizing stamps, and even buy/sell stamps during the end-of-the-meeting auctions.

Meetings are open to the public and anyone who is interested in learning more about the Magic Valley Stamp Club can attend. Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month at Camelot Village, 1000 Camelot Drive, at 6:30 pm.

Upcoming meeting dates are December 16, 2025; January 20, 2026; February 17, 2026; March 17, 2026; April 21, 2026; and May 19, 2026. For more information, contact Harlan Howell, preston702001@yahoo.com. ♦



Courtesy of Magic Valley Stamp Club



Courtesy of Magic Valley Stamp Club



Nativity Nights 2025

December 13th -14th
5pm-8pm

FREE FAMILY FUN

St. Paul Lutheran Church
602 MORGAN BLVD.
HARLINGEN, TX



HOLLY HOLLY VIBES

Rockin' Retro

Christmas Parade

Saturday Dec 13, 2025
Parade starts at 6:00 pm

Cash Prizes for 3 best Floats
Prizes will be awarded at 8 pm at City Hall Pavillion

50's 60's 70's 80's 90's

Get set for a Holiday Season like no other! The Rockin' Retro theme promises an unforgettable trip back in time, spanning from the Golden Age of the 50's, the vibrant 60's, the Disco Era of the 70's, the bold 80's, and the radiant 90's. Gather your poodle skirts, jukebox, disco balls, and neon attire, and unleash your creativity.

Please join us after Parade at City Hall Parking Lot for some live music - food vendors will be available on site

For more information call City Hall at 956.748.2102 or register online at Riohondo.us



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Sanctioned Event
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F&T VALLEY MOTORSPORTS
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0900AM - 11:30AM
LAST BIKE OUT 1200

Riding to Padre Island Brewing Company

Cash Bar, 50/50, Raffles, Card Game
Drinks & Food Available for Purchase



Rotary Club of Harlingen

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Holiday Magic

SHOPPING SPREE FOR HCISD

SAT | 13 DEC | 7:00

Note: All event volunteers must be registered with HCISD for the fall semester. To register, scan the qr code and follow the prompts as needed.

"Believe in the magic of Rotary."



Year In Review

2025: Some Signs of Growth Despite Long-Standing Business Closures

By Lisa Campos

While reflecting on 2025, the biggest news of the year for Harlingen had to be the early morning fire on July 22 that destroyed Johnny's True Value hardware store at 914 W. Tyler Ave. After an investigation, the Harlingen Fire Marshal's Office ruled the cause of the fire as "undetermined." The building was then demolished with an empty lot now standing in its place. Losing a long-standing business such as Johnny's, which had been in business for 40+ years, was a significant loss for Harlingen. The community came together, holding multiple events to raise funds for the store's displaced employees.

Many other long-standing businesses struggled and closed, such as:

La Feria News, which closed after 102 years in publication

The Light House Lighting Center, which



Courtesy of Harlingen Fire Department

is liquidating items and closing all its Rio Grande Valley locations after 53 years in business

Dick Office Supply, which closed after 45 years in business at the end of 2024

F.Y.E. after 20+ years in business

Los Fresnos News, after 20 years in business

Brain Freeze, which closed after 14 years in business

Additional business closures included:

National retailers Party City and Big Lots

Locally owned restaurants Sabores del Golfo, Ricardo's Restaurant, Sportsmen's Bar and Grill, Taqueria El Zarape, Taqueria El Buen Pastor, and Classic's Bar and Grill

Leaux Leaux Paranormal Investigations, LLC, which offered historical tours and ghost hunting tours

Despite a challenging economy, some new businesses opened in Harlingen in 2025. Most were restaurants, but a few retailers opened as well.

One of the most anticipated business openings of 2025 was the Harlingen Urgent Vet that opened on August 12 at 6710 W. Expressway 83. It is the first urgent veterinary clinic in Harlingen. Services



Courtesy of Lisa Campos



Courtesy of Lisa Campos

include allergic reactions, vomiting, routine and emergency surgeries, dental cleanings, vaccines, wellness visits, and more.

New retailers included Kay Jewelers at the Shops at Valle Vista shopping center, 902 Dixieland, Suite 104; SOHO Thrift Boutique at the El Mercado Shopping Center, 712 N. Sunshine Strip #36; Furniture Express at 1802 S. 77 Sunshine Strip, Suite 200; Cavender's, a national western clothing store, at 914 Dixieland Road; Casa Kevin, a discount store, at 710 N. 77 Sunshine Strip; Dollar

General (DG) Market at 1379 Bass Blvd.; and Western Outpost at 221 E. Monroe.

Activity establishments that opened in 2025 include SOHO Hot Yoga at the El Mercado Shopping Center, 712 N. Sunshine Strip #36; Foxhound Jiu-Jitsu, a martial arts studio, which opened at 211 W. Jefferson, Unit 3; and Hitting Zone, a batting cage facility, opened on March 1. They are located at 6201 FM106 Unit 4A.

Several eateries opened in 2025:

Greater Coffee Co. opened on January 29 at

101 Stuart Place Road, Suite E.

Agave Azul Mexican Restaurant opened on February 12. They are located at 318 W. Jackson #2.

Buckets Barn and Grill, an outdoor venue and bar, opened on March 13. They are located at 20860 FM508.

Isidora's Family Kitchen also opened on March 13. They are located at 3201 S Expressway 83, Unit C.

Yummy Pho opened on May 8 at 711 N. 77 Sunshine Strip.

Nothing Bundt Cakes opened on May 16 at the Harlingen Corners Shopping Center, 2819 W. Expressway 83, Suite 300.

Station 83, a bar, opened on June 5 at 1105 S. Tamm Lane.

El Torito Snacks opened on July 19 at 1202 N. 7th Street.

The owner of Drink Up opened The Pink Bubble, an event venue and bar, on August 7. Both bars are located at 1226 Morgan Blvd.

Jimmy's Pizza opened on September 19 at 1209 N. 7th Street, Suite E.



Courtesy of Lisa Campos



Courtesy of The Pink Bubble

Starbucks at the Dilworth Shopping Center, 6102 W. Expressway 83, opened on September 22.

Mesquite Valley Smokehouse opened on October 15 at 105 W. Tyler. They are only open for dinner but plan to

expand to offer weekend lunch service soon.

Los 3 Garcias Mexican Grill celebrated their grand opening on October 23 with free food at their location, 1621 E.

Harrison.

The Other Room Wine Bar opened on October 30 at 119 W. Van Buren, Suite 7.

Cookies4College has indicated they will open their first storefront at 119 W. Van Buren, Suite 6, by the end of December 2025.

Looking into 2026 and beyond, Harlingenites can look forward to the following business openings:

HOTWORX, a 24-hour sauna workout facility, will be opening in 2026 (if unable to open in winter 2025).

Additional tenants are coming to the Dilworth Shopping Center such as a combination Jamba Juice/Auntie Anne's Pretzels, Cold Stone Creamery, and Little Caesars Pizza.



Courtesy of The Other Room Wine Bar



Courtesy of RGV.me

The flagship tenant, Starbucks, opened on September 22.

Mexican food restaurants Taquero Mucho and Limon Mexican Grill & Seafood will open sometime in 2026.

Texas Brewery Patrol, a locally owned brewery with restaurant, is in the works to open in 2026.

HTeaO, a chain of tea shops from Texas, will open its first Harlingen store next fall. It will be located at 1219 W. Tyler, with the owner's other business, Rio Valley Meat and Butcher Shop.



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Atomic Kids Learning Center, a daycare facility from Brownsville, will open its first Harlingen location in 2026.

The Deep End, a golf simulation bar, will be adding pickleball courts to their location at 3601 W. Business 83.

I will continue to track

these new businesses and others as they are announced on my Facebook page, www.facebook.com/ExploreHarlingen. ♦



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to all our neighboring friends
and may the lights be bright
this new year with God's love.
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~ The Elizondo Family ~



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Local Flavors

By Laisa Chavez Macias

Just along the city limits of Harlingen, heading south on the expressway, sits the Longhorn Cattle Company at 355 W. Expressway 83. Built back in 1985 on what was once nothing but country land, the iconic barn with the longhorn logo, and the passing scent of smoked BBQ cannot be missed.

Although it's technically in our neighboring city of San Benito, Longhorn Cattle Company is a go-to for so many in the Rio Grande Valley, especially Harlingen residents. Its location makes it easy for anyone to stop in and enjoy an

I Shot the Bull

amazing home-cooked meal in a family-style setting. As they would say, "Step out of the city, and into the country!" And if you are lucky, you just might get to step out back and meet the Longhorn steers Wayland and Willie.

I stopped by to congratulate the owner, Bill Turner, on their 40-year anniversary, and we chatted a little about how it all started and what keeps them going.

Founded by Bill's father-in-law, Longhorn Cattle Company has always been a family-oriented BBQ restaurant. However, when Bill and his wife Lisa took over, they knew they wanted to up the ante.

To stand out from the competition they knew the quality of meat would be the ticket



Courtesy of Juan Macias of J Macias Photographer

to longevity, so that became their number one focus. The menu says it all, one page and five meat options: melt-in-your-mouth brisket, Polish sausage, lean tender smoked turkey breast, baby back ribs, and fall-off-the-bone smoked chicken. Each of them perfectly seasoned, BBQed to perfection, and served in variation.

But wait a minute, what about the world-

famous bean soup everyone talks about? Bill assured me that was all part of the master plan. You see, part of their success is that they don't waste anything, and the beans are a perfect example.

Renderings and secret seasonings contribute to their delicious flavor. So, if the beans and bananas pudding get you in the door, it's the main course that keeps you coming back.



Courtesy of Juan Macias of J Macias Photographer



Courtesy of Juan Macias of J Macias Photographer

While we visited, I decided to try something on the menu I had never had before: Loco Bill's signature sandwich, the Poor Boy. It's a Hoagie style sandwich stuffed with chopped brisket, sliced brisket, and Polish sausage. All I can say is that it did NOT disappoint. My usual go to order is the chop cheddar spud that was featured on the Texas Bucket List, which is actually the "newest" item on the menu, introduced in the 1990s. To be honest, I'm not sure which one I like more now, but either way, you can't go wrong! I did grab that banana pudding to go, and do not sleep on the flan by local baker, Marcella.

It was such a pleasure having lunch with Bill and just hearing about the restaurant. The atmosphere in the barn is calm and relaxing. There are no TVs, and lots of natural light. Bill and Lisa were intentional about creating a space that was inviting and family friendly. 40 years is a long time to stay in business, so before I left, I had to ask what he considered the key to this milestone.

His advice is the (Keep it Simple) KIS



Courtesy of Juan Macias of J Macias Photographer

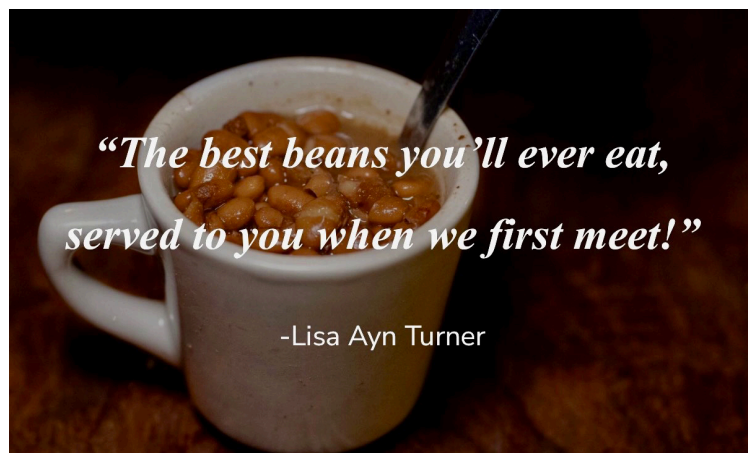
method. He's had a dedicated staff that has been with him for decades. Bill's sage advice includes "Don't lose your identity; a small menu says a lot" and "Don't lose focus on what you're doing, and don't overthink; just keep things as simple as you can."

You may be wondering about the title of this article. Bill said, "I do want to tell you one more thing: I shot the bull." The motto that he and Lisa, who passed away in 2020, had means "If you get an opportunity to visit with somebody, take it, because you never know who you are talking to, and you never know what's

going to come out of it."

I shot the bull.

Signing off until next time, your friendly local foodie, Laisa :) ♦



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of the Month

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- Treasures

Recipes



Courtesy of Mamie Moon

By Mamie Moon

I like to spend my Christmas morning surrounded by my family watching our kiddos ripping into their gifts from Santa. I find prepping a Christmas casserole the night before and popping it into the oven the morning of is not only delicious but also convenient. I get to sit back relax and be present while enjoying the people who matter the most.

Ingredients:

- 1 large green bell pepper



Courtesy of Mamie Moon

Christmas Morning Casserole

- 8 large eggs
- breakfast sausage
- handful of spinach
- 1 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 1 cup diced mushrooms
- 1 large diced onion
- teaspoon salt
- teaspoon pepper

Instructions:

1. Using a large skillet over medium to high heat, brown the sausage. After the sausage is cooked, pour it into a bowl and set it aside.
2. In the same skillet, toss in your onion, spinach, bell pepper, and mushrooms. Cook while stirring for about 7 minutes.
3. Once they're cooked,



Courtesy of Mamie Moon

4. Get a large baking dish and spray it with coconut cooking spray. (This will make it easy to cut and serve.)
5. Add the sausage and all the cooked ingredients into the baking dish.
6. Cover the dish in foil paper and place to set in the fridge overnight.
7. On Christmas morning bake the dish at 375 degrees for 12 minutes and enjoy!

Not only will your home be filled with the joy of Christmas but also the delicious smell of this casserole. This dish has been a favorite for my family since I was a young girl. I hope it becomes a favorite for your family as well.

May you and your family's Christmas be merry and bright!

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.♦



@_MAMIEBAKES_

Comfort & Joy
annual holiday concert event

7:30 PM, December 4th 2025
Immaculate Heart of Mary
Catholic Church
412 South C Street
Harlingen, Texas

1818 W Tyler, Suite C,
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Reoccurring Events

Downtown Market Days
First Saturday (December 6),
9 am to 3 pm
Jackson Street and Centennial
Plaza

**The Market at Wild August Nursery
and Flower Farm**
Every Saturday morning
(December 6, 13, 20, and 27),
9:30 am to 1 pm
16802 Garrett Road

Valle Vista Mall Market Days
Every 2nd Saturday (December 13),
11 am to 7 pm



Harlingen Art Night
Last Friday (December 26),
7 pm to 10 pm
“A” Street and Jackson

December Special Events

**Harlingen Concert Association
Presents: Mariachi 7 Leguas**
December 2, 7:30 pm
Christian Fellowship Church

39th Annual Lighting of the Arroyo
December 4, 6:30 pm to 9 pm
McKelvey Park

**Comfort & Joy Annual Holiday
Concert by Chorus of the Rio
Grande Valley**
December 4, 7:30 pm
Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic
Church



**The Circus of Death! A Murder
Mystery Dine-in Experience**
December 5, 6, 12, and 13,
7 pm to 9 pm
Panchito's Restaurant

City of Harlingen Christmas Parade
December 5, 6 pm
Jackson Ave.

3rd Annual Rattlesnake Run Level 5
Open December 6-7
HEB Tennis Center



**First Annual Harlingen VAB
Christmas Car Show and Toy Drive**
December 6, 8 am to 1 pm
Harlingen Convention Center

**San Benito Professional
Firefighters Association Backdraft
Scramble Golf Tournament**
December 6, 8 am
Treasure Hills Golf Club

Christmas Craft Fair
December 11, 9 am
Encore Tropic Winds RV Park

Winter Celebration
December 11, 5 pm to 7 pm
Harlingen Public Library

The Nutcracker
December 12 and 13, 7 pm to 9 pm
December 14, 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm
Harlingen Performing Arts Center



Nativity Nights
December 13-14, 5 pm to 8 pm
St. Paul Lutheran Church

**Rotary Club of Harlingen •
Holiday Magic Shopping
Spree for HCISD**
December 13, 7 am
Target

Wreaths Across America
December 13, 10 am
Ashland Memorial Park Cemetery

**Christmas Comedy &
Music Variety Show**
December 19, 7 pm to 9 pm
Park Place Estates

**The Night Christmas Turned Pink
Christmas Bazaar**
December 21, 5 pm to 10 pm
Harlingen Convention Center

Jenuine Cello
December 27, 7 pm to 10 pm
Cork-N-Craft

Beyond Harlingen

Pearl Harbor Remembrance Ride
San Benito to South Padre Island
December 6, 9 am
F&T Valley Motorsports (San Benito)

**City of Combes 22nd Annual
Christmas Parade: Candyland
Christmas**
December 6, 5:30 pm
Templeton Avenue

Lighting of Tree
December 6, 6:30 pm
21626 Hand Road (Combes)

**Weslaco Lighted Christmas Parade:
A Country Christmas**
December 13, 5 pm (Santa Dash)
6 pm (Parade)
Texas Blvd. (Weslaco)

Rockin' Retro Christmas Parade
December 13, 6 pm
Rio Hondo City Hall

**HAPPY
HOLIDAYS**

Events subject to change.

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

Moves, Adds, and Changes

By Lisa Campos

This column discusses business-related updates in Harlingen.

Achievements

On November 10, the Harlingen High School South Mighty Hawks Band placed 17th of all 5A schools at the UIL State Marching Contest at the Alamodome in San Antonio. This is the highest ranking by a Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District (HCISD) school in HCISD history.



Courtesy of Harlingen South Band

Announcements

Julissa “Julie” Schuster, born in Port Isabel now residing in Harlingen, was one of 456 contestants chosen from 200,000 applicants to appear on the second season of Squid Game: The Challenge. The episodes began streaming on Netflix on November 4.



Julissa “Julie” Schuster, Courtesy of Netflix

Awards

Sir’s Martini Lounge was named 2025 People’s Choice Award for Best Commercial Interior on October 23. Texas Downtown held a contest on Facebook where Sir’s Martini Lounge competed with other establishments across the state. Sir’s Martini Lounge received 483 votes to secure the win.



Courtesy of Sir's Martini Lounge

The Harlingen Arts & Heritage Museum held its annual Taste of Harlingen contest and fundraiser on October 16. Several local restaurants provided food samples to guests who then voted for their favorite tastes of the evening. Two participants won four awards: America's Events and Catering won 1st place for Best of Taste and Best Presentation and Graham's Kitchen won 2nd place for Best of Taste and People's Choice.



America's Events and Catering, Courtesy of Harlingen Arts & Heritage Museum



Graham's Kitchen, Courtesy of Harlingen Arts & Heritage Museum

New Cafés and Restaurants

HTeaO, a Texas born and brewed tea company that features a menu of tea and coffee, is opening its first location in Harlingen. The owner of Rio Valley Meat Butcher Shop will incorporate HTeaO to its location at 1219 W. Tyler. The opening date will be sometime in 2026.

Moves

On November 5, Sugar and Hayley's Harness Wear, a pet supplies store, moved to their new location at 122B W. Monroe, across from New York Deli.



Harlingen Nutrise Spot is moving to a new location at 1209 N 7th Street, Suite D.

Closings

Landon Jennings and Sharice Jennings, co-owners of local newspapers La Feria News and Los Fresnos News, announced the closing of their newspapers at the end of October. La Feria News had been in publication for 102 years, while Los Fresnos News had been around for 20 years. A reduced staff has moved its office to Harlingen and continues to support Explore Harlingen Magazine and other publications.

Mi Raiz Café, a locally owned coffee shop, closed on November 14.

After 14 years, Brain Freeze, a locally owned yogurt shop, closed its doors on November 21.

F.Y.E. (For Your Entertainment) at Valle Vista Mall announced that after 20 years, they will be closing after the 2025 holiday season on December 31.



Courtesy of Lisa Campos

Anniversaries

The following local businesses are celebrating milestone anniversaries:

- J&R Snack Bar, 5 years♦

SAVE THE DATE
December 2, 2025



MARIACHI 7 LEGUAS
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HARLINGEN
Concert
ASSOCIATION

2025 / 2026
Concert Season

Dates, artists, and programs are subject to change.



THE BROTHERS
DOOBIE
A Tribute to the Doobie Brothers
Tuesday, Nov. 4, 2025

This group of artists offer an exceptional musical tribute dedicated to honoring the iconic sound of The Doobie Brothers and Michael McDonald. Comprised of six incredibly talented musicians, the Brothers Doobie captivate audiences with their uncanny ability to recreate the soulful sounds and energetic performances of the original band. This group will take you on an unforgettable musical journey back to the '70s and '80s. "This is by far my favorite tribute act, hands down. Love Sam's vocals!" -Mayor Joe Cafora, City of East Haven, CT



Tuesday, Dec. 2, 2025

Mariachi 7 Leguas is well known throughout the RGV and was founded in 2004 by Emilio Santos. In this time, the group has been given many awards and recognitions, not only locally in their hometown of McAllen, but also in the United States & Mexico, and across the globe. They perform at RGV Charro Days, weddings, birthdays, quinceañeras, serenades and a variety of other special events. Their soulful performances are deeply rooted in Mexican tradition.

The Holiday Concert for Harlingen Concert Association will feature traditional Mariachi music along with classic Christmas songs.

PIANOMANIA!

Rockin' the 1950's with Jared Freiberg

Tuesday, Jan. 20, 2026

Piano virtuoso Jared Freiberg has been performing 1950s era music since he was a teenager. With the good vibrations of legends like Jerry Lee Lewis, Fats Domino and Ray Charles, Freiberg's electrifying piano mastery is a non-stop parade of favorite Golden Oldies, celebrating the music and artists of the early years of Rock 'N Roll - musical treasures that live on through generations...and now they are sounding better than ever! Jared has toured the country and released an album of original music. "It is the most high-energy show I have ever seen." The Oregon Times



CHRIS RUGGIERO:

Teenage Dreams & Magic Moments

Tuesday, Feb. 10, 2026

Chris Ruggiero and his band takes audiences on a journey through the golden age of vintage rock and roll, breathing new life into the timeless music of the 1950s, '60s and '70s. Often described as an "old soul" despite his young age, Chris has performed in concert on a PBS-TV's broadcast specials, has played sold out shows in Las Vegas, and released 4 full length albums. "Chris is so good at making the classics his own. I went to his show and loved every minute." -Bill Medley, The Righteous Brothers



GQ
(GENTLEMEN'S
QUARTET)

Tuesday, Feb. 24, 2026

GQ (Gentlemen's Quartet) is a modern, elegant take on some of the most famous music ever written, fusing together multiple genres in a perfect symphony of sophistication, virtuosity, and humor. Comprised of cello/mandocello, electric guitar/bass, percussion, piano and violin, with special appearances by female vocalist Erin Shields, their concerts offer audiences a new, often deeper, way of listening to music. The group members have collectively performed over 10,000 shows. "GQ dazzled our audiences with amazing virtuosity, beautiful music and tremendous personality...our patrons were in absolute awe of the talent they brought to the stage." -City Stage & Symphony Hall (Springfield, MA)

SHOWS START AT 7:30 P.M.

TO PURCHASE TICKETS:
Visit: www.harlingenconcert.com

For additional information:
Email: heatkts@gmail.com
Call: 956-392-9757



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

Christmas Comedy & Music
Variety Show

Julia
Lane
Cooper
&
Curt
James



12/19
7-9pm
Park Place
Estates
in
Harlingen
Texas

CITY OF HARLINGEN CHRISTMAS PARADE

GRINCHMAS

IN THE CITY

PRESENTED BY:

ELLIFF MOTORS

2025 FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5TH | 6:00PM
HISTORIC JACKSON AVE.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
CALL 956-216-4910

SAVE THE DATE
WESLACO LIGHTED CHRISTMAS PARADE
A Country Christmas

Saturday, December 13, 2025
Downtown Weslaco (Texas Blvd)

Santa Dash (Fun Run) - 5:00PM
Parade - 6:00PM

FOR SPONSORSHIP/REGISTRATION OR GENERAL
INFORMATION CONTACT:
www.weslaco.com | chamber@weslaco.com | 956-968-2102



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**A ministry of Harlingen Methodist Church
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Treasure Room open Saturdays, 9 – 11:30.

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- Blue Sunday
- Boys & Girls Club of Harlingen
- Children's Bereavement Center
- Culture of Life Ministries
- FMC: Backpacks for Kids
(supporting 9+ local schools)
- FMC: Pumpkin Patch Storytime
- FMC: Annual Community
Thanksgiving Meal
- Harlingen Neighborhood Food
Pantry
- Loaves & Fishes
- Team Walker Pete Foundation
- Young Life
- Young Lives

 **Contact us or find us on Facebook** /Second-Chance-Thrift-Store



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OPEN EARLY THANKSGIVING DAY!

Orders To Go: 6am-10am
Thanksgiving Day Buffet: 10am-5pm

Event Spotlight

Revving Up for a Cause – First Annual VAB Christmas Car Show Toy Drive

By Abigail Muñiz-Garcia

Holiday cheer will fill the air as shiny, antique cars line the lot at the Harlingen Convention Center on Saturday, December 6, 2025. The first annual VAB Christmas Car Show Toy Drive will take place from 8 am to 1 pm that day and is sure to bring a festive mix of classic cars and community giving all for a good cause.

Visitors are encouraged to bring new, unwrapped toys to donate or just join in on the fun for a morning outdoors with the family, taking in the sight of beautiful cars. Car owners can compete for a spot among the top 10 winners



Courtesy of AACA RGV



Courtesy of AACA RGV
that will receive a plaque in recognition while another car will be awarded as the “best in show” for a total of 11 plaques being handed out that day.

Moses Mendoza, a member of the Harlingen Veterans Advisory Board (VAB), was tasked to help with the organization of the event. The VAB was created to advise the city commission on the needs of veterans in the area.

He is also involved with the Antique Automobile Club of America (AACA) Rio Grande Valley (RGV) Chapter. The AACA at the national level was founded in 1935 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The AACA of the RGV is supporting the VAB with their efforts in this event.

“There’s a lot of work behind the scenes,” Mendoza said.

The toys collected will benefit local veteran families.

When asked what kind of

cars people can expect at the car show, Mendoza said it’s hard to say since the event is in its first year, but the RGV is known to have nice cars.

“Oh, we got some beautiful cars,” he said. “From Model Ts to Model As to cars from the 40s and 50s and 60s and 70s, now the 80s and 90s. And then of course, there’s always the young group with the new cars... the 90s and now the 2000s. New cars are allowed. They’re our future antique cars.”



Courtesy of AACA RGV



Courtesy of AACA RGV

Mendoza hopes that there will be a good turnout because when it's all said and done, the event is for a good cause: to benefit local veteran families during the holiday season.

"As an organization, the VAB, it will show us that

we contributed something positive and return it back to the community cause that's our idea in the first place," Mendoza said.

The fee to enter a vehicle in the car show will be new toy donations for both a male and a female worth a total of \$20-\$25.

For more information on the event, you can visit Facebook pages for the Harlingen Veteran Advisory Board or the Antique Automobile Club of America – Rio Grande Valley Chapter or email mmen700224@aol.com. ♦

FIRST ANNUAL HARLINGEN VAB CHRISTMAS CAR SHOW-TOY DRIVE

Toy Donations Welcomed

JOIN US! PLAQUES FOR TOP TEN CARS

December 6, 2025
8 AM - 1 PM
Harlingen Convention Center
701 Harlingen Heights Dr,
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Parking Lot

Enjoy a day of cars and giving

For more information email:
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Courtesy of AACA RGV

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Transformations: Faith, Freedom, and a Fresh Start

*By Beth Marie Cantu
Ensign*

Enzo Racca and his wife Chandré's move from Boston to the Rio Grande Valley (the "Valley") wasn't the result of a long-term plan, but rather a leap of faith during a challenging season in their young family's life. Seeking support and community, they relocated so his wife could be near friends and mentors involved in ministry work at the Faith Pleases God Church. It was during this time of personal healing and reflection that they began envisioning bringing Transformations—a faith-supported, evidence-based community dedicated to helping people overcome addiction—to the United States.

Enzo had experienced the power of recovery firsthand and felt called to help others. "About 15 years ago, I was in state prison in Massachusetts, facing five to ten years for bank robbery to support



Courtesy of Enzo Racca

my lifestyle of addiction," he said. "I was in and out of prison for over 20 years, going through the programs and the short-term healings."

His turning point came when his mother confronted him after seeing him on the news. "She told me I broke her heart into four pieces, and I was so crushed on

the inside that I did it again," he said. "I went back to my prison cell, and I was contemplating suicide when I looked out my prison window and God showed me a vision. I was holding a Bible." That moment changed everything.

After completing a therapeutic program himself, he devoted his

life to helping others do the same. After graduating from his program, Enzo went on to be a full-time student at college, receiving a Bachelor of Arts in pastoral ministries and biblical studies.

Today, that personal redemption fuels his mission, which led to Transformations USA—a new branch of the faith-based recovery community that began in Australia and is now taking root in South Texas.

At the heart of Transformations is a unique blend of evidence-based recovery and spiritual renewal. Still, Enzo emphasizes that Transformations welcomes those who may be uncertain about faith. "It's okay if they're not 100% sure before they come in, but if they're willing and open to seeing if it will click with them and connect with them, then we would encourage them to come in," he explained.

At Transformations, community and

accountability are at the heart of lasting change. Participants are encouraged to be open about their struggles, not just with program leaders but with peers who share similar journeys. This peer-to-peer approach allows individuals to be gently confronted with areas they need to work on while also receiving support and guidance on how to overcome them. By combining honest feedback with practical encouragement, the program fosters both personal growth and hope for real, lasting transformation.

Transformations depends entirely on the support of the local community and its partners. While the organization works closely with churches, it also relies on the generosity of local businesses and individual



Courtesy of Enzo Racca

donors. This support allows Transformations to focus fully on its mission: helping people overcome addiction and rebuild their lives. The community's involvement is what makes lasting change possible—restoring families, breaking cycles of addiction, and creating hope for future generations.

Looking ahead, Transformations plans to expand far beyond the

Valley. “The vision for Transformations Program USA is to plant a men’s home, a women’s home, and women with children [facility] here in the Valley and throughout the state of Texas,” Enzo shared. “But we also want to have centers in every state... anywhere where the need is necessary.” That growth, he believes, begins with faith and the community’s continued support.

And for those ready to take their first step toward

freedom, Enzo’s message is simple: “Just don’t give up. Keep showing up.”

To learn more about Transformations—or to get involved—visit transformationsusa.org. You can support their mission by becoming a monthly sponsor for a resident, sending a donation to P.O. Box 530160, Harlingen, TX 78553, or by scanning the QR code included in the flyer in this article.♦

Save the Date

transformations
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Courtesy of Enzo Racca

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Check-In Time: Dec 6, 2025 @7am

Match Info: 4-man teams/\$400 entry fee per team

Extras: Up to 2 mulligans per team/\$20 each

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Artist of the Month

By Beth Marie Cantu Ensign

For country artist Brody Rivers, music wasn't a lifelong plan — it was something that found him when the world stood still.

When Rivers was in college at the University of Texas San Antonio (UTSA), he began serving in a local worship band. "When I finished college and came back home, COVID hit. That's when I really got into music. I started learning guitar."

What began as a creative outlet during quarantine soon turned into a passion, leading to the birth of the Brody Rivers Band in 2023, and a fast-rising music career rooted in



Courtesy of Brody Rivers Band

Brody Rivers Band: Composing His Own Path



Courtesy of Brody Rivers Band

small-town authenticity. Alongside Rivers, the band features David Rodriguez on bass, Steven "Steph" Flores on electric guitar, Jose Guerrero on drums, and Javier Alcala, a multi-instrumentalist who fills in on drums, electric, or bass whenever needed.

Born and raised in Rio Hondo, Texas, Rivers' sound is rooted in the soul of rural

South Texas. "Growing up in a small country town, everyone listened to country music," he says. "That's just the way of life down here." His blend of mellow Texas country, nostalgic '90s influences, and a modern candy-coating gives his music a familiar yet refreshing flavor — a sound he describes as "soft Texas country with a little grit."

While artists like Cody Johnson, Randall King, and Tyler Childers have helped shape his sound, Rivers' voice and storytelling rise from a place all his own. "It's like a complete exaggeration," he laughs, explaining how he takes real-life moments and gives them a little extra oomph to make them truly sing.

Rivers' dedication to storytelling has already earned him national recognition. Rivers launched into the mainstream music scene in 2024 with a bold step onto the national stage, auditioning for American Idol on ABC and breaking into the show's Top 100.

His 2025 single "Halfway to Heaven" was nominated for Song of the Year at the Josie Awards — hosted at the Grand Ole Opry. "Just having your name just even announced there is incredible," he says.

Despite his success, Rivers is refreshingly down-to-earth. A self-taught musician and

the only performer in his family (“except my mom, when she tries to sing but messes up all the lyrics,” he jokes), he’s also juggling life outside of music. Between long weekends of performances, he’s working on opening his own insurance agency and preparing for one of his biggest milestones yet — fatherhood. “I’ve got a baby boy on the way,” he says proudly. “That’s my number one [priority].”

And when the lights go down and guitars are packed away, Rivers finds peace in simple things. He enjoys woodworking, building

Pinterest-inspired home projects for his fiancée, and carving out time for family. “Life’s good right now,” he says. “I just want to see which of these paths is going to provide for me for now.”

For young musicians in the Rio Grande Valley, Rivers lends one tiny piece of advice: consistency. “It’s what every other artist has been telling me,” he says. “It’s the truth.”

Whether it’s music, family, or the next great song, one thing’s for sure — Brody Rivers is composing his own path, one verse at a time. ♦



Courtesy of Brody Rivers Band



Courtesy of Brody Rivers Band



Courtesy of Brody Rivers Band

WED-THURS 5-12, FRI-SAT 5-2, SUN 5-12

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The Valley's Tennis Paradise

By Roel Rodriguez

Indian Wells: Tennis Paradise

When professional tennis fans hear the term, “Tennis Paradise,” they often think of the Indian Wells tennis center located in Palm Springs, California. It’s home to the BNP Paribas Open, which hosts the most elite men’s and women’s professional tennis players on the ATP Masters 1000 and WTA 1000 tour. Top players like Carlos Alcaraz, Jannik Sinner, Aryna Sabalenka, and Coco Gauff convene at Indian Wells each March to compete in this highly lucrative and premier tennis tournament.

My brothers and I attended the BNP Paribas Open last year and we quickly understood why Indian Wells is called Tennis Paradise. The tennis matches are of high caliber, and spectators receive every conceivable amenity. Palm Springs, California is a desert oasis with beautiful landscapes, great weather, and no shortage of celebrities. We saw Bill Gates, Zendaya,

and Will Ferrell at the Carlos Alcaraz match. As a first-timer, it was truly a remarkable experience and one that I will cherish forever.

Harlingen’s USTA Pro Circuit Event

I was also a first-timer at the 2025 Men’s \$30,000 ITF World Tennis tournament, held at the Harlingen Country Club (HCC), this October. It is a USTA Pro Circuit Event, which is the best way for tennis players to qualify for higher-level events. This professional men’s tennis tournament has been held in our community for more than 20 years with the help of host HCC tennis pro/director, Andy Carter.

The 2025 Men’s ITF World Tennis tournament began on October 25 and ended on November 2 – a full week of up close and personal action with access to more than 60 U.S. and international players who all have the potential to be the next generation of ATP men’s professional tennis. The HCC tennis tournament highlights notable Harlingen competitors



Courtesy of Roel Rodriguez

who have gone on to succeed in professional tennis.

Harlingen Hospitality

One unique feature of the tournament is that the players stay with “host” families from our community. Host families open their homes and hearts to these young professionals and provide them with all the support (lodging, food, etc.)

that they need while playing at HCC for the week. The new singles champion, Alex Martinez from Spain, mentioned during his post-victory speech how much he had appreciated his host family and everything that they did for him throughout the week. He said his stay felt like being “at home,” allowing him to focus on his play and ultimately win the

tournament.

Affordable Admission for All

Admission to the week-long tournament is free to watch all the qualifying and main draw singles and doubles matches. The only exception are the semifinal and final matches, which cost \$5 to attend with “first come first serve” seating in general admission. This seating is equivalent to courtside seats at any major tennis tournament but with a better view. You are literally on top of the action with seating only a few yards away from the court, which is a dream for tennis fans



Courtesy of Memorial Middle School

and amateurs looking to improve their own skills.

VIP seats for tournament sponsors, HCC supporters, and their guests are also available. All sponsorship funds are used for player prize money, tournament costs

for officials, and charity. This year's chosen charity was the Sunny Glen Children's Home. The tournament organizers also provided food and drinks free of charge for all spectators/volunteers for most of the week. Tournament shirts were only \$10. Compared to Indian Wells, the prices are an absolute bargain.

RGV's Tennis Paradise

So, is this the Rio Grande Valley's (RGV's) Tennis Paradise? Yes, it sure is! First and foremost, it is the only professional USTA tennis tournament in the entire RGV.

Secondly, the HCC is a great venue. They have plenty of free parking with quick access to the immaculate tennis courts. The volunteers, staff, and members are courteous, friendly, and accommodating to all

spectators, especially children. For those who love tennis but don't want to spend a lot of money to watch quality professional tennis, this is the place to be.

The weather was amazing throughout the three days that I attended the tournament. It was in the mid-70s all week. This may have just been good timing but, nonetheless, HCC was prepared and provided covered seating to protect spectators from the sun.

Student Athlete Outreach

HCC and Andy Carter opened the tournament to all tennis programs in our community. Tennis players from Harlingen South, Harlingen High, San Benito High, Raymondville High, and Memorial Middle School in Harlingen attended for free. The students all had the opportunity to experience front-row action and talk with the professional tennis players.

The humble players signed autographs and took pictures with fans. Many wore their college/university attire. Spectators were able to talk with the players about their college tennis experience. Our local high school and



Courtesy of Roel Rodriguez
December 2025



Courtesy of Roel Rodriguez

middle school players were surely inspired to witness firsthand that the game of tennis can lead to educational opportunities.

Must-See Event Each October

I have never experienced this level of professional tennis match proximity. I can't believe it took me this long to attend this fantastic

tournament. It is a must-see event in our beautiful city and on my "to do" list every year from now on.

A big thank you to all the generous sponsors who allow HCC to make this tournament an affordable family and fan experience. Great job by Andy Carter, his team, the volunteers, and HCC tennis members who work tirelessly to host this quality event each year.

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HARLINGEN COUNTRY CLUB

FASTSIGNS Make Your Statement

Tennis Paradise does exist in Harlingen, and it happens every year in

October at the Harlingen Country Club. Join me in paradise in 2026!♦

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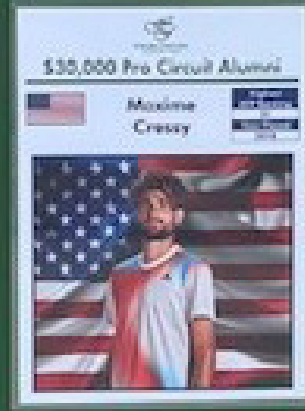
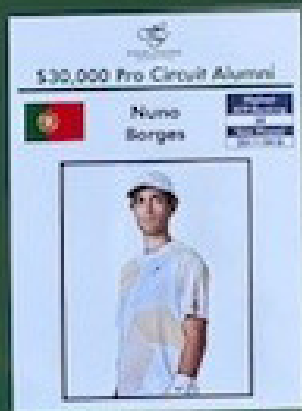
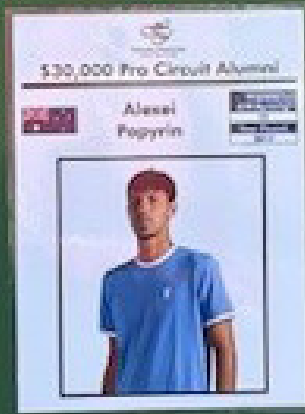
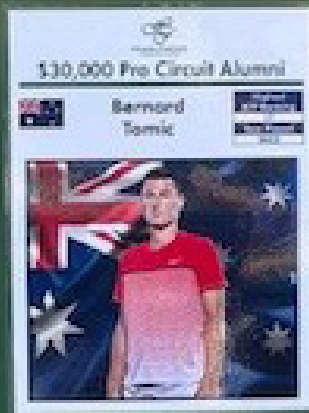
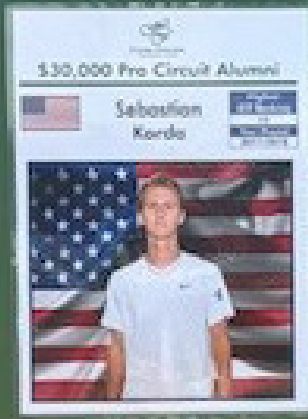
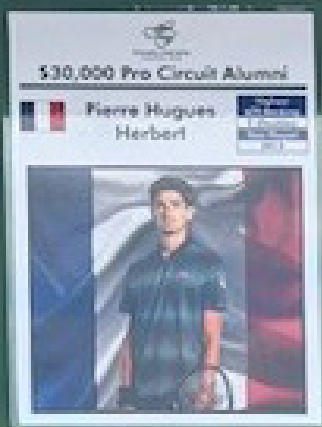
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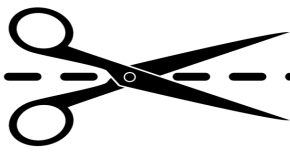
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