

# OPINION

## Laredo Morning Times

A HEARST NEWSPAPER

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### CUIDANDO LO NUESTRO

# Laredo walks to end Alzheimer's

Happy Birthday to Carolyn M. Schmies! As Schmies celebrates and enjoys time with her family and friends, Karla Varela, a communications major from Texas A&M International University, will be filling in for her. We are excited that Karla has chosen to do her internship with the United Way of Laredo. This gives her the opportunity to learn about nonprofit agencies and resources available in our community. Thank you, Karla!

On Oct. 18, Laredo will mark the annual Alzheimer's Association Walk to End Alzheimer's. This is more than a fundraiser; it is an event that spreads awareness and hope to those struggling with a loved one who suffers from Alzheimer's. The Laredo community will gather once again to honor those who are fighting, or who have fought the disease. Together, Laredo walks towards a future without Alzheimer's.

The Walk to End Alzheimer's will commence at Texas A&M International University. Those who have registered will be able to check in as early as 8 a.m. A formal ceremony will be held at 9 a.m., followed by the official start of the walk at 9:30 a.m. As the date approaches, local advocates ensure that the public is aware of this important fundraiser. On Sept. 11, the community gathered at Ryze Rooftop Lounge for a kickoff event featuring live music, guest speakers, and on-site registration. These events share information, raise awareness, educate the public about the walk, and provide resources that the Alzheimer's Association offers. In fact, Laredo is in urgent need of awareness of Alzheimer's,

as many are unaware that Texas border communities are most likely to suffer from this disease.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, an estimated 7.2 million Americans aged 65 years and older are projected to be living with Alzheimer's disease in 2025. Data indicate significant inconsistency in prevalence among ethnic groups: Latino adults are approximately 1.5 times more likely than non-Hispanic White adults to be diagnosed with Alzheimer's. This heightened risk is further reflected in estimates suggesting that about 14% of the American Latino population currently lives with the disease. The elevated prevalence of Alzheimer's in Latino communities emphasizes the critical importance of targeted awareness and research efforts. Despite these high rates, border communities such as Laredo continue to face significant shortages in health care resources, resulting in many individuals receiving insufficient diagnosis, treatment, and ongoing care for Alzheimer's disease.

The Alzheimer's Association Walk to End Alzheimer's is the world's largest event to raise awareness and funds for Alzheimer's. The Alzheimer's Association is a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating a world without Alzheimer's. They are dedicated to donating to global research, promoting early detection, and providing support. This organization provides virtual support groups, education programs, a free nationwide 24/7 hotline, online community forums, and caregivers. They provide support not only on a

national level, but also on a local level. For example, the Walk to End Alzheimer's event is held across 600 communities in the United States. This event hopes to bring people together and reclaim the future from the disease that robs memories and time.

For many, these statistics and facts can be easy to overlook. But behind these numbers is a family living with the reality of Alzheimer's. Their stories are important to emphasize as they represent the urgent need for awareness, resources, and support. Peggy Duncan, executive director for United Way of Laredo, shared her own experience caring for her father, who battled Alzheimer's. For many, the fight against Alzheimer's is deeply personal. "You never know when you or someone you love is going to need the services from a nonprofit organization," said Peggy Duncan. She recalled turning to an Alzheimer's support group when her father was ill. Peggy's stories remind us why awareness and support matter. Navigating Alzheimer's without enough support can be lonely and overwhelming. Organizations like the Alzheimer's Association reassure families they are not alone. With the support the association provides, families are ensured to have coping strategies, support, and information. The Alzheimer's Association continues to strive for a world without Alzheimer's and gives hope to the nation. Peggy Duncan is a fitting example of how this organization shares hope and guidance. "With the support and continued research, my hope is that they will find a cure," she said. That hope is the

heart of these events. Together, we continue to fight, to build community, to provide support, and move closer to finding a cure.

If you are interested in being a part of this change, you can search for the 2025 Walk to End Alzheimer's Laredo and register on [act.alz.org](http://act.alz.org). Every step you take is helping spread awareness. If you cannot attend, donate. The funds raised go directly to support Alzheimer's care and research. Spread awareness. Share this information with your friends, family, and colleagues. As a community, we must support those who may feel they face this disease alone. It is vital to recognize that our community is at considerable risk, and we cannot continue to ignore these alarming numbers. Come and support those who suffer from Alzheimer's. On Oct. 18, Laredo will gather for a future without this disease. Together, in a purple sea, we walk with hope.

**Mark your calendars Casa de Misericordia: Breaking the Silence Awareness Walk**

Join us in honoring all families that have lived the cycle of family violence 6-8 p.m. Wednesday at 6602 Thomas Ave.

**Laredo Main Streets: Harvest at the Border Special Activities**

You are invited to the Webb County Heritage Museum located at 810 Zaragoza St. to visit the "Patch Hours" on Friday 6-10 p.m. and Saturdays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

They also have special activities scheduled for:

- 6 p.m. Friday, Oct. 10, Boo-quets & Bubbly with Ethereal Flowers
- 10 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 11, Coffee Rave at the

Patch

**Imaginarium of South Texas: AEP Light up the Night**

Join us for the AEP Light up the Night 4-8 p.m. Friday at the Imaginarium on the main campus of Laredo College (West End Washington Street) Building P-149. For more information, please call 956-728-0404.

**United Way of Laredo: Neon Dash 5K Run/Walk**

United is the Way we support our community. Join us Saturday at North Central Park (Pre-registration \$25 On-site registration \$35) Race takes off at 8 a.m. Packet pickup for registered runners will be on Friday at the United Way of Laredo office at 1815 E Hillside Road from 6-8 p.m. only. United Way agencies will be present at the event with fun activities for the kids including face painting, coloring, games and much more. For more information 956-723-9113

**Habitat for Humanity Laredo: Celebrates 30 Years**

In honor of their 30th anniversary, Habitat is hosting a special celebration 6-9 p.m. Oct. 16. Habitat is a tax-exempt nonprofit organization that helps families achieve the dream of being a homeowner. Tables and Sponsorship opportunities are available. Please contact outreach@habitatlaredo.org for more information or call 956-231-9724.

**Laredo Regional Food Bank: 42nd annual Rice and Beans Bowl**

Join the Laredo Regional Food Bank for World Food Day from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Oct. 16 at the Joe A. Guerra Laredo Public Library at 1120 E Calton Road. For more information call 956-723-3725 or admin@laredoregionalfoodbank.org

**Imaginarium of South Texas: HEB Free Family Fun Night**

Join us for the HEB Free Family Fun Night 4-8 p.m. Oct. 17 at the Imaginarium on the main campus of Laredo College (West End Washington Street) Building P-149. For more information, please call 956-728-0404.

**Laredo Main Street: Farmers Market**

Come join the fun! The next Farmers Market will be from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Oct. 18 at The Outlet Shoppes at Laredo! Each month features a unique theme, seasonal activities and exciting workshops. Every visit is a new and memorable experience. Whether you're shopping for fresh ingredients, supporting local artisans, or enjoying live entertainment, the Farmers Market is the place to be. Vendor applications are now open! For more information email: [lmsevents01@gmail.com](mailto:lmsevents01@gmail.com)

**Area Health Education Center (AHEC): 41st Virtual Annual Update in Medicine Conference on Various Conditions Affecting Our Community**

AHEC will be having a Virtual Seminar from noon to 5 p.m. Oct. 24 and from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Oct. 25. Up to 11 Continuing Education Unites (CEUs) for Healthcare providers. There are fees for the conference. For more information, contact AHEC at 956-712-0037 or email [hmedellin@mrgba-hec.org](mailto:hmedellin@mrgba-hec.org).

*If you have an upcoming community event or information on a nonprofit 501(c)(3) charitable organization you would like to share, please email me at [956cuidandolonues-tro@gmail.com](mailto:956cuidandolonues-tro@gmail.com).*

*Karla Varela For the United Way of Laredo*

### YOUR OPINION

## Addressing low levels of Vitamin D in our community

Since beginning my work in Laredo in 2016, I have consistently observed a concerning trend: both adults and children in our community struggle with low levels of vitamin D.

This issue has only worsened since the COVID-19 pandemic, when families spent more time indoors, reducing sun exposure — the body's natural way of producing vitamin D.

Vitamin D plays an essential role in maintaining bone health, supporting the immune system, and promoting overall well-being. Low levels are linked to increased risk of infections, fatigue, mood changes, and in chil-

dren, growth concerns. Despite Laredo's abundant sunshine, many residents are still deficient, often due to limited outdoor activity and dietary habits.

To address this growing public health concern, I urge local health authorities to promote two simple but effective strategies: encouraging the inclusion of vitamin D-enriched foods in the daily diet and supporting safe outdoor activities, such as afternoon walks. Foods like fortified milk, cereals, orange juice, eggs, and fatty fish are excellent sources that can be easily incorporated into family meals. Meanwhile, brief periods of afternoon sunlight,

paired with regular physical activity, can naturally boost vitamin D production while also improving mental health and physical fitness.

Our community has faced many health challenges, but this is one area where preventive measures can make a significant difference. By prioritizing vitamin D, we can strengthen the health of both children and adults in Laredo, creating a healthier and more resilient future.

*Dr. Lisamar Maldonado, MD. Board-Certified Pediatrician and Psychiatrist, Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Sub-specialist*

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Laredo Morning Times does not publish anonymous letters. Letters must include the writer's first and last names as well as a phone number to verify identity. The phone number is not published; it is used solely to verify identity and to clarify content, if necessary.

When responding to another's letter, writers should focus on the topic and not on the original writer themselves. No name-calling or gratuitous abuse is allowed. Letters are edited for style, grammar, length and civility. Also, letters longer than 1,000 words will not be accepted.

Please send letters to editorial@lmtonline.com attached in a word document or in the email itself. If you cannot send an email, mail to Letters to the Editor, 5711 McPherson Rd Suite 203A, Laredo, TX 78041.

### YOUR OPINION

## Proposition 14 would add billions in funding to fight dementia

Nov. 4 is an election day. Maybe some aren't aware because we aren't voting for a president, nor are these the looming 2026 midterm elections that promise to right the ship, or threaten to sink it, depending upon whose Letter to the Editor or Facebook post you've read.

This is a Uniform Election date which allows us the opportunity to vote on constitutional amendments that were passed for our consideration by the Texas legislature. Within these seventeen amendments is Proposition 14, to fund the Dementia Prevention Research Institute of Texas, also known as the DPRIT.

At \$3 billion in funding over 10 years, this amendment stands to finally make Texas among the leaders in the United States in state funding to help those 459,000 people aged 65 and older currently living with Alzheimer's disease in Texas. And as anyone already familiar knows, this personal family tragedy is only further compounded by 1,089,000 caregivers, mostly unpaid family members, suffering right

alongside their afflicted loved ones.

Alzheimer's strikes Hispanics 1.5 times more than non-Hispanic Whites, and it strikes African Americans 2 times more. With Texas having the highest population of African Americans in the U.S., and the 2nd highest population of Hispanics, we Texans should be alarmed. Closer to home, our very own Webb County stands among those with the highest percentage of the population in the category afflicted in Texas and across the U.S.

Right now, the DPRIT is our best chance to fight the escalating onslaught of dementia in Texas. This would significantly advance research in Alzheimer's and other neurological diseases, additionally funding technologies and programs that will spur improved patient care, and even economic growth and job creation in related medical fields here in Texas.

Those of us who care about this fight that live in the City of Laredo and across Webb County are especially fortunate to have had consistent and proactive supporters of

our cause as Senator Judith Zaffirini and Representative Richard Pena Raymond. The work that I have personally known them to do on our behalf in this area over the 10 years of my advocacy has been inspiring. They were both early initiators of this bill in the Senate and the House, and they ultimately stood among the wholly bipartisan members of the Texas legislature as Sponsors of it.

And now, with our representatives in Austin having done their part, it is our turn. If not already done, your last day to register to vote is Oct. 6. Early voting is from Oct. 21 through Oct. 31, and Election Day is Nov. 4.

Vote YES on Proposition 14, approve the funding needed for the DPRIT, the Dementia Prevention Research Institute of Texas. Right now, between those afflicted with Alzheimer's and their caregivers and families, over 1.5 million Texans are suffering and need our help. Your vote counts and will change lives now and in the years to come. Please say "YES." Thank you.

*Joe Arciniega*