

Sharing hope: Faith, family and fresh starts

By Peggy M. Duncan
UNITED WAY OF LAREDO

As we begin this new year, many of us think of changing habits, ideas, routines and discarding outdated items. Like the saying goes, "Out with the old and in with the new." As I do my "reset" for this new year, I think of the things that are of priceless value to me. My faith, family and treasured friends.

As we attended Nocturnal Adoration, Father talked about the importance of prayer and examination of conscience. He mentioned how when someone takes a vow to be ordained, it includes a vow to pray the Liturgy of the Hour. He said morning prayers are said in the morning and night prayers are done in the evening. It was like God was speaking directly to me. So many times, as I rush around in the day, I find myself reading all of the prayers that evening or sometimes even the next morning to catch up. This year, my goal is to keep up with my morning and evening meditations.

When it comes to family and friends, my goal is to reconnect. In every Christmas message I sent out this holiday season I wrote, "I love you." I do not want there to be any doubt the day I am gone from this earth that I loved someone. Life is so short to spend it angry or upset.

The final "frontier" is the house (LOL). You never realize how much stuff you have until you try to find something. I told my husband, "It's time to unclutter." We have a room in the house that has all of the "stuff" we use seasonally or when needed. I found two roasters, a coffee dispenser, rosary beads, nativity costumes, retreat items and

much more.

Once you decide what you can part with, there are a few charities that can benefit from your gently unused items. You might even have some new ones that you would like to donate as well. Let's start with shelters that can use items for youth: Sacred Heart Children's Home and SCAN are a couple I can think of. The age range for these shelters can vary. A couple of shelters for families include Bethany House and Casa de Misericordia. These two can also use adult items. Shelters are always in need of basic necessities such as socks, shoes, under garments, personal hygiene items (toothbrushes, shampoo, soap, deodorant, cream, etc.), cleaning supplies (laundry detergent, hand soap, dishwashing soap, paper products, etc.).

There are also a few agencies that have thrift stores where people can go to purchase items. Salvation Army, Bethany House, Good Will and Habitat for Humanity are a few places that come to mind. A few of these places can even pick up your items if you make the proper arrangements. Remember, if you can deliver it yourself, that helps keep the charity's costs down.

If you are looking to help seniors, Catholic Charities has a senior program. They provide basic essentials and have a simple food pantry for clients. Several of the senior nursing homes will also take donated items for their clients. Last year, my youth group collected socks and personal hygiene items for seniors. The students got community service hours, and the elderly received blankets, socks and items to brighten their day. Be prepared: The nursing

home only asked to be able to take a photo to share its appreciation.

Volunteers Serving the Need (VSTN) is another charitable organization you might choose to help. Ms. Gigi Ramos is the founder and CEO. VSTN opened as a thrift store in January 2010. At the time, there were over 8,000 military veterans in Webb County. They started off by helping 27 veterans. By August 2011, the number of veterans and families assisted increased to approximately 500 a month. They helped with food and toiletries, but adapting to the needs, they now help with food stamp applications, overcoming debt and finding clothing suitable for job interviews.

Their website shares that, originally, the Veterans Project was created to help veterans and to bring to light the common misconception that "The U.S. government provides military veterans with any type of assistance that they may need." In reality, veterans receive support only for military service related to injuries and illnesses. Once home, veterans are just like any other group of individuals, and sometimes they have a hard time making ends meet. As Ms. Ramos states, "It is so sad to see what some of these veterans are going through. Some are young, some are old, but oh, the problems they've got!"

For more information on Volunteers Serving the Need, visit their website at www.vstn.org. You can also call them at 956-77-2960 or visit their office at 1202 Salinas Ave. in Laredo. For information on any of the other charities listed in this article you can also dial 2-1-1. Choose the option for local community resources. Simply ask for the phone number for the charitable

organization. 2-1-1 can also assist if you are looking for local community resources in times of need. Visit www.211texas.org for more information.

Mark Your Calendar GIRL SCOUTS OF GREATER SOUTH TEXAS: GIRL SCOUT COOKIE TIME!

Girl Scouts is excited to announce that the 2026 Girl Scout Cookie Program officially kicked off. Laredo-area Girl Scouts should already have cookies on hand. Keep an eye out for their cookie booth sales at participating WalMart's, Sam's Clubs and HEBS. You can also try their Cookie Locator at: <https://www.gsgsl.org/en/cookies.html>. The 2026 Cookie Program will conclude on March 1.

R.B. COWL REHABILITATION CENTER: CHILDREN'S ORTHO- PEDIC CLINIC

Ruthie R. Cowl Rehabilitation Center will be hosting the monthly Children's Orthopedic Clinic on Tuesday. Advanced treatment is offered for a range of conditions, from simple fractures to total joint replacements, sports injuries and management of musculoskeletal disease. Registration is required. There is a \$15 processing fee. No referral or insurance required. To schedule an appointment call 956-722-2434.

AREA HEALTH ED- UCATION CENTER (AHEC): CERVICAL CANCER AWARENESS MONTH PREVENTION & EARLY DETECTION

AHEC will be having a certification training for Community Health Workers via Zoom on Wednesday at 11am. Belinda Flores, RN, will be the guest speaker. If you would like to register or need additional information, contact

the AHEC office at 956-722-0037.

LAREDO MAIN STREET: FARMER'S MARKET HAPPY NEW YEAR!

The next Farmer's Market will be happening on Saturday from 1:00 a.m. to 3 p.m. 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 Farmer's Market is the place to be. For more information, email lmsevents0@gmail.com.

STATE EMPLOYEE CHARITABLE CAM- PAIGN: LOCAL CAM- PAIGN MANAGER

The SECC Laredo Area is accepting 2026 applications from charitable organizations interested in managing the day-to-day operations of the SECC Campaign. Applications are due Jan. 22 by midnight. Email secc@laredo.org for an application or more information.

LAREDO CRIME STOPPERS: 30TH AN- NUAL MENUDO BOWL XXX

Saturday, Jan. For more information on how to get involved, sponsor, participate and volunteer, reach out by calling 956-724-8776 or sending an email to info@laredocrimestoppers.org.

BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF LAREDO: 28TH ANNUAL C.Y. BENAVIDES III WINE TASTING GALA

Join the WBCA celebration of fun by participating in this year's gala. The theme is A Night at Studio 54. It is a black-tie event scheduled for Jan 31 from 6

p.m. to 2 a.m. at the Laredo Country Club. For more information, email: info@bgclaredo.com or call 956.242.4942.

COMBINED FEDER- AL CAMPAIGN: FED- ERAL EMPLOYEE DONATIONS

Just a friendly reminder that, the Office of Personnel Management has extended the CFC campaign deadline to Jan 31. All federal employees can go to the CFC website to make their payroll deduction donations to charities. Visit givecfc.org.

WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRA- TION ASSOCIATION: HEB FIREWORKS EX- TRAVAGANZA

Everyone is invited to join the fun on Feb. 1 at the Webb County 1848 Event Center located off U.S. 59. Tailgate & Live Music from 2 to 10 p.m., with a Fireworks & Drone Show at 8 p.m. Admission is free for everyone!

UNITED WAY OF LAREDO: LOVE IS IN THE AIR VALEN- TINE'S DAY DANCE SPONSORED BY FAL- CON BANK

United Way of Laredo will be having a Valentine's Day Dinner & Dance Celebration. The event is sponsored by Falcon Bank and will be held at the Falcon Bank Event Center on Feb. 4 from 7 to 10 p.m. Music will be provided by Evolution De Miguel Pastrana. Come enjoy the fun! For ticket information or table reservations, contact United Way at 956-723-9933 or email uwlaredo@united-waylaredo.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 956cuidandolodolomestros@gmail.com.