

OPINION

Laredo Morning Times

A HEARST NEWSPAPER

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SCAN prevention programs help protect our kids

Happy Sunday, everyone! Last week, our focus was on Serving Children and Adults in Need (SCAN). As mentioned, this organization offers a large array of services in Webb County and the surrounding areas. Hats off to SCAN for their amazing staff that successfully receive federal grants to support all the services they provide.

Last week, I highlighted their treatment, recovery and intervention programs. The SCAN Emergency Youth Shelter is one of their intervention programs. As United Way (UW), our Admissions & Allocations committee has visited and toured this program; the last two years, our committee has been brought to tears by the children's situations.

"We've seen children placed in the SCAN temporary shelter that have been taken by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services because the children tested positive for drugs. It's heartbreaking that one child was a newborn. Others were still toddlers," said Dr. Daniel De la Miyar, UW vice president for A&A.

SCAN's Emergency Youth Shelter is a blessing for our community. There are times when children must be sent out of town until another family member or a foster family can be located to take them in. Fortunately, we have SCAN's emergency shelter in our community.

This week, I would like to spotlight their prevention programs. SCAN offers prevention programs for youth, adults, families and coalitions. These programs provide age-appropriate education to increase protective factors, enhance resiliency and decrease risk factors. They give alternatives to encourage bonding with peers, family and community to help prevent drug use and promote behavioral health.

SCAN also offers presentations to the community to provide awareness and knowledge of substance use, prevention and/or behavioral health promotion. SCAN also does compliance checks to ensure that tobacco retailers comply with federal and state laws and regulations, reducing the access of tobacco products to our youth.

Another prevention program is SASI. It focuses on helping youth and young adults to identify and challenge behaviors, beliefs, and social norms that increase the risk of violence including sexual assault.

The program emphasizes a "bystander" intervention. Everyone has a role to play in ending sexual violence. It teaches youth and young adults the skills necessary to identify problematic or dangerous behaviors, develop empathy for victims, and practice safe and effective methods of intervention.

Through coalitions,

SCAN has formed partnerships with others to organize, educate and implement activities that empower citizens to prevent substance use and abuse. These coalitions can be found in Starr, Maverick and Webb counties. They also have groups like the Laredo Drug Prevention Alliance (LDPA); the Innovative Healing Centered Project (IHCP); Project HOPES & HOPES II; and the Texas Home Visiting (THV) programs.

Project HOPES is an evidence-based prevention program designed to increase protective factors in families with children considered at risk between the ages 0 to 5. The program is curriculum-based and offers case management to meet the comprehensive needs of the families. Project HOPES II focuses its services on adult or adolescent caregivers with children ages 0 to 5. It uses the SafeCare Curriculum, which is strength-based and emphasizes improving positive parent-child interactions, improved health decision-making, and parental supervision of children.

The Texas Home Visiting (THV) is a free and voluntary program with specially trained staff who help and support parents with children from birth to 2 years. Its goal is to help make "twos terrific for parents and children!" It promotes child development and school readiness. It

helps to improve maternal and child health, security and well-being. Services include:

- Play and learn strategies (PAL) infant curriculum;
- Screening and referrals to ensure that participants are provided with access to information and resources to meet their comprehensive needs;
- Ongoing, active, and strengths-based case management services;

These are just some of the prevention programs that SCAN offers.

For more information on their services please visit their website at www.scan-inc.org. You can also contact them by calling 956.724.3177 or emailing them at info@scan-inc.org.

Mark your calendars IMAGINARIUM OF SOUTH TEXAS: HEB FAMILY FUN NIGHT

Join us for the HEB free Family Fun Night on Thursday, March 12th from 6-9 pm at the Imaginarium located 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

The next Farmer's Market will be happening on Saturday, March 14, from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM at The Outlet Shoppes at Laredo! Each month features a unique theme, seasonal activities and exciting workshops. Ev-

ery 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. For more information email: lmsevents01@gmail.com.

LAREDO PHILHARMONIC: THE 7 WORDS OF CHRIST

Come experience this evocative and spiritual masterpiece brought to life by the voices of the Laredo Philharmonic Chorale. The event will be on Sunday, March 29th at 3pm at the TAMIU Fine and Performing Arts Center. Admission cost is \$30 & Students with ID can enter for free. For tickets call 956.763.9960.

LAREDO ANIMAL PROTECTIVE SOCIETY (LAPS): DOG & PUPPY SUPPLIES

LAPS is requesting assistance with food, pet items and cleaning supplies for their shelter. Items include Heavy-duty trash bags, paper towels, adult & puppy canned food, vinegar, degreaser, dog treats, sharpie pens and more. Donations can be dropped off from 11am - 6pm Wednesday through Sunday at 2500 Gonzalez St.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES, DOL & UNITED WAY OF LAREDO: VITA PARTNERSHIP

Need free tax help? Catholic Charities & United Way of Laredo have partnered to provide free Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA).

Volunteers are IRS Certified Preparers and are ready to help you. Call 956.722.2443 or 956.723.9113 to schedule your appointment.

LAREDO VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE

Free tax help is here! The Laredo VITA program has IRS Certified Preparers ready to help you. Don't stress about your taxes - let a qualified volunteer handle it for you. Call 956.307.8138 or visit www.vitalaredo.org.

CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER: 26TH ANNUAL CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION & AWARENESS CONFERENCE

Save the date. The CAC Child Abuse Prevention & Awareness Conference will be Thursday, April 2nd at the TAMIU Student Center. For more information, call 956.712.1840.

AREA HEALTH EDUCATION CENTER: BOWLING TOURNAMENT

The AHEC Tournament is scheduled for Saturday, April 4th from Noon to 3:30pm at Jett Bowl North. For more information, contact AHEC at 956.712.0037.

If you have an upcoming community event or information on a non-profit 501(c)(3) charitable organization you would like to share, email 956cuidandolonuestro@gmail.com.

Peggy M. Duncan, executive director of United Way of Laredo

YOUR OPINION

Community is key to UISD Wind Symphony's summer success

Congratulations to members of the UISD Wind Symphony for performing a spectacular 3rd Annual Summer Patriotic Concert at the LC Guadalupe & Lilia Martinez Fine and Performing Arts Center on July 7, 2024.

The wonderful musicianship was at full display as the UISD Wind Symphony, consisting of UISD, LISD, VMT, TAMIU, retired local and out-of-town music educators, and community members, offered an array of beautiful musical selections that included "Portrait of Freedom" accompanied by a slide presentation of U.S. veterans. The musical piece "Duty, Honor,

Country," based on General Douglas McArthur's farewell address at West Point Military Academy, was beautifully narrated by TV personality Ruben Villarreal.

Other crowd-pleasers performed were "España Cañi" and "Out of Africa." "A Moment for Moricone" was exquisitely sung by dramatic soprano Irma Isela Reyes. The Wind Symphony executed a terrific rendition of Leroy Anderson's "Bugler's Holiday" under the stupendous baton of guest conductor Rosario de Leon and featuring the amazing trumpet trio of Michael Valdez, Joseph Bermea and Abel Vergara. The hundreds of flag-waving veterans and

public in attendance were honored by the playing of their service branch song within the "Armed Forces Medley."

Successful public presentations require the assistance of a multitude of people. Huge gratitude goes to Dr. Julie Bazan, the first Hispanic woman ever elected AHEC National President, and Hazel Medellin and Vicky Morales, AHEC Academic Programs Coordinators and the entire AHEC family for their staunch support and for their assistance before, during, and after the performance.

Thank you to Laredo Police officer Argentina Flores for setting up a wonderful afternoon of

music through her noble singing of the national anthem. Much gratitude is due to Ruben Villarreal, emcee, for his magnificent contribution as Master of Ceremony and narrator. Much appreciation goes to Dr. Minita Ramirez, president of Laredo College, not only for hosting this event, but for her warm reception to the Wind Symphony and the attending audience.

This incredibly successful event would not be possible without the guidance and support of UISD Fine Arts Director Gerardo S. Rodriguez and the Wind Symphony committee members John J. Mallon, Hiram Gonzales (librarian), Tomas

Aguilar and Rosario de Leon. Special thanks goes to Chris Moore, Wind Symphony music editor, and to Dionicio Cardenas, WS communications director.

Thank you to Luis Rodriguez-HEB Plus; Sara Castellano-HEB Saunders; Erika Rodriguez-HEB Mercado; Zulema Castro-HEB Guadalupe; Ricardo and Alma Cavazos-RC Food Service and Produce; Vicente Gonzalez-Los Pasteles Bakery; Jorge Garza-Panos Bakery; Bill Green-LMT publisher; Ana Laura Guajardo and Nancy de Anda-Women's City Club; Sandra Saucedo-Wal-Mart Supercenter Clark Blvd.; Ike Epstein and Arthur Soliz-

Dr. Ike's; Kelly Cruz-Adams Printing; Kristina Valenciano-Laredo College events coordinator, along with staff members Hector Mares, Brenda Wolfe and Vicky Ramos; and a very special thank-you to Roberto Gonzalez-Dannys/La Roca/La Carreta franchises for assisting in promoting this concert.

Last, but certainly not least, thank you to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Color Guard for the presentation of colors and Jesus "Guero" Segovia, U.S. Army veteran, for reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

*Warm regards,
Carlos Gil, UISD Wind Symphony Conductor, USAF Veteran*

GUEST EDITORIAL DALLAS MORNING NEWS

Government transparency in Texas is more cloudy than clear

Texans are increasingly aware of their right to see information collected and held by local and state agencies, and digitization and the internet have made those records easily accessible. That's the good news.

The bad news, based

on our experience, is that many government officials seem ever more interested in and adept at controlling the flow of information. They use a variety of tactics to avoid or delay releasing information that should be readily available. That attitude violates

the spirit of the state's Public Information Act, and sometimes the text of the law itself.

The law's intent is unmistakable. The preamble to Chapter 552 of the Texas Government Code says: "...it is the policy of this state that each person is

entitled, unless otherwise expressly provided by law, at all times to complete information about the affairs of government and the official acts of public officials and employees."

The act goes on to emphasize that public servants do not have the right to decide what the people should or shouldn't know. When in doubt, officials should err on the side of openness. "This chapter shall be liberally construed in favor of granting a request for information," the law reads.

Public entities often ignore that instruction. A few weeks ago, this Editorial Board was trying to

find out which local governments had received cybersecurity grants through a federal program. All we wanted was a list of grant recipients and amounts awarded.

The Texas Department of Information Resources and the governor's office both declined to answer our emailed questions. We were told we had to file a formal open records request. We did, and about a week later, the governor's office responded with the list of grantees.

The information was as innocuous as expected. There was no good reason to require a formal open records request for such basic information. In fact,

the list probably should have been posted online so anyone, including prospective grant applicants, could see it.

Governments can ask the Texas attorney general's office to review public information requests and rule on whether the agencies must disclose all of the requested records. There are legitimate reasons to withhold especially sensitive information, but this process is over-used.

To quote the law one last time, "government is the servant and not the master of the people." We have the right to know what our public agencies know, and they have the duty to tell us.

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.