

## OPINION

## Laredo Morning Times

A HEARST NEWSPAPER

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## CUIDANDO LO NUESTRO

## Volunteers drive kidney foundation's support

Hope everyone is having a happy and safe Easter Sunday!

April is widely recognized for several notable observances: April Fool's Day, Tax Day, Earth Day, Autism Awareness, Stress Awareness, Sexual Assault Awareness/Prevention and National Volunteer Month. Over the course of the next few weeks, I hope to cover several of these topics.

In honor of National Volunteer Month, I would like to highlight the importance of volunteers. Volunteers can assist charities in so many ways. They can help at special events with setting up, registration, selling tickets, providing information, greeting people at the door, guiding people with questions, reassurance, cleaning up, and passing out waters. The ways to make a difference are endless. The fact is volunteers help our community thrive.

Most charities exist because of volunteers. For some reason a person feels called to action for a cause that has touched their lives. Many times, it is because of a difficult situation in their life that a person dedicates their time and energy to help others in need.

In 1977, a young girl was involved in a tragic accident. Due to the extent of her injuries, she was flown to San Antonio. After succumbing to her injuries, the family decided to give the gift of life and hope to others by donating her organs. Touched by the profound significance, it ignited a

spark in the hearts of two determined women, the late Angela Borchers and Patsy Sanditen. They saw a gaping void in the community's support system for transplant patients, and they resolved to make a difference.

As Blanca Villarreal, volunteer board member and grant writer for the organization shared, "The Kidney Foundation of Laredo was born from the spark of hope by Mrs. Borchers and Ms. Sanditen. In those early days of the organization, these women forged a vital partnership with the dialysis clinic. They became a lifeline of hope for those patients battling chronic kidney disease. They witnessed firsthand the arduous reality of renal replacement therapy. They saw the hours patients spent connected to a machine. The fragile balance between life and survival."

The agency began as a local chapter of the National Kidney Foundation. In 1981, it restructured and became the Kidney Foundation of Laredo (KFoL). The organization did not receive any financial support from state, federal or national agencies. It was the volunteers that kept the agency moving forward.

"It was the commitment of the volunteers that kept our costs down and program services going," Villarreal said.

Volunteers held meetings, conducted fundraisers and worked to ensure that every dollar was stretched to its utmost potential. Their focus

was unwavering: to alleviate the suffering of dialysis patients. With treatments being several hours long and three times a week, it made it difficult for patients to work. The burden of medical expenses and countless prescriptions highlighted the need for financial assistance and patient support.

Today, the Kidney Foundation's volunteers and board members are made up of the social workers, dietitians, nurses and doctors that help patients on dialysis. They see firsthand the needs of their patients. The beauty of the organization is that it works with all of the dialysis centers in Laredo, Zapata and Cotulla. They focus on four core programs: nutrition, transportation, emergency bill pay and medical copay assistance. They try to provide vital support by addressing the patient's most pressing needs.

Currently, there are 11 dialysis centers in our South Texas area, serving more than 900 patients. While the centers are owned and operated by private companies, the Kidney Foundation is a nonprofit organization that tries to assist the patients with end-stage renal disease. The KFoL is 100% volunteer-driven.

You can be a hero for kidney health by joining the fight for kidney health on May 5. Sign up for their annual bowl-athon at Jett Bowl North 6 p.m.-8 p.m. For more information on the event or the KFoL, visit their website at [www.helpk-](http://www.helpk-)

fol.com or follow them on Facebook.

### Mark your calendars IMAGINARIUM OF SOUTH TEXAS: AEP LIGHT UP THE NIGHT

Join us for the AEP Free Family Night on Friday, April 10, from 6-9 p.m. 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.

### CATHOLIC CHARITIES, DIOCESE OF LAREDO: VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE (VITA) SUPER SATURDAY

Free tax help is here! On Saturday, April 11, VITA Volunteers will be ready to help you. Don't stress about your taxes — let a qualified volunteer handle it for you. The event will be at their office located at 1919 Cedar from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Call 956-722-2443 or visit [www.dioceseoflaredo.org/catholic-charities](http://www.dioceseoflaredo.org/catholic-charities).

### LAREDO PARKINSON'S SUPPORT GROUP: UNDERSTANDING PARKINSON'S

Everyone is invited to come learn more about Parkinson's. The workshop will be held on Saturday, April 11, from 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at the TAMIU Western Hemispheric Trade Center, Room 111. The event will feature three keynote speakers: Kristen Martulis, DNP, APRN, AGNC-C, Department Of Neurology-UT Health Science Center in San Antonio, will present "A

New Frontier vs Deep Brain Stimulation"; Leila Saadatpour, M.D., and assistant professor of neurology, UT Health Science Center in San Antonio, will present "Non-Motor Symptoms in Parkinson's"; Pablo Coss, M.D., and assistant professor of neurology at UT Health Science Center in San Antonio, will present "Parkinson's Therapies" and an update on Laredo Clinics. For more information or to register for the event, call 956-942-5511.

### LAREDO VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE (VITA)

Just a friendly reminder, April 15 is right around the corner. 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](http://www.vitalaredo.org).

### LAREDO LITTLE THEATRE: ROCK OF AGES MUSICAL PRODUCTION

The show will run April 16-26. Visit their website for times and ticket information at [www.laredolittletheatre.org](http://www.laredolittletheatre.org).

### SCAN: PLAY DAY

You are invited to join SCAN for an afternoon of fun with activities, arts & crafts, music and more. Families of all ages are welcome to this free event on Wednesday, April 22, from 3:30-6:30 p.m. at the Peg Energy Stadium. For more information, call 956-608-3852.

### VOLUNTEER SER-

### VICE COUNCIL FOR BORDER REGION: ALL WE NEED IS LOVE & A DASH OF STYLE 34TH ANNUAL ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS DAY LUNCHEON&FASHION SHOW

The event will be held on Wednesday, April 22, at the Laredo Country Club \$100 per seat or \$1,000 a table.

For more information, contact Claudia Arredondo at 956-612-4664 or Juanita Zepeda at 956-235-3599.

### AREA HEALTH EDUCATION CENTER (AHEC): GENETICS CONFERENCE

All parents and families are welcome to attend this resource fair for children with disabilities and autism. Friday, April 24, from 8 a.m.-1 p.m. at the Laredo Public Health office located at 2600 Cedar Ave.

For more information, call 956-712-0037.

### UNITED WAY OF LAREDO: THAT'S HOW WE ROLL: BOWLING TOURNAMENT

The event will be held Saturday, April 25, at Jett Bowl North from 12 p.m.-3pm. For more information, call 956-723-9913.

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

*Peggy M. Duncan United Way of Laredo*

## OP-ED

## Easter: A message of hope for our community

In every human heart, there is a longing for hope.

As the bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Laredo, I see this longing in our families, in our neighborhoods, and in the people of our community as we search for peace and meaning in our lives and in our world. The season of Easter speaks directly to that longing! It reminds us that even in difficult times, hope is never lost, because Christ the redeemer continues to be present with us amidst the struggles and difficulties of this world.

Easter is the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the moment when suffering is transformed, and life overcomes death, when we are reminded that God's love is stronger than anything we may face. The message of Easter is not meant for only a few. It is a message that reaches across all people, inviting each of us to believe in new beginnings!

In our daily lives, we all experience moments of



Photos by Diocese of Laredo

"The message of Easter is not meant for only a few," writes Bishop of the Diocese of Laredo James A. Tamayo, shown at the San Agustín Cathedral.

struggle. We face uncertainty, challenges, and loss. Yet Easter reminds us that these moments do not define us. Through faith, we come to see that even in our most difficult moments, God is at work, bringing healing, renewal, and new life.

The season of Easter calls us to live with in-

attention- to choose compassion over indifference; to choose forgiveness over resentment; to choose hope over despair.

As a community of faith, we are reminded that we do not walk alone. We are a people who care for one another, who support one another, and who journey together

through both joyful and difficult times. In these simple but powerful ways, we will reflect the



Tamayo leads the Easter procession at the San Agustín Cathedral in Laredo.

power and victory of Christ in our world!

I invite each of you, no matter where you are in your journey of life, to take a moment this Easter to reflect, to give thanks, and to open your heart to the hope that God offers.

May this Easter bring peace to your heart, strength to your spirit, and joy to your homes. Be

assured of my prayers for you, your family, and our beloved community.

And may we always remember that even in the darkest moments, hope rises, because Christ is risen!

*Alleluia, alleluia!*

*Most Rev. James A. Tamayo  
Bishop of the Diocese of Laredo*

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## Supporting children in need of foster homes

I am blessed and grateful to know my good friend and sister in Christ, Elisa Valadez, and to have witnessed the incredible work she started in 2016 at Our Forever Hope.

This organization has been a lifeline for children in our community who are displaced, vul-

nerable, or in need of loving homes.

As Elisa says, "Together, we can make sure no child in our community feels forgotten or goes without the safety and love they deserve."

Currently, over 200 children are awaiting foster placement, each deserving safety, stability,

and care. Every placement makes a difference, and your compassion can transform a child's life.

If you are considering opening your home and heart to a child in need, please contact Elisa Valadez at 956-645-2474. Join us in giving these children a forever hope.

*Sincerely, Laura Llanes*

## 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](mailto: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.