

CUIDANDO LO NUESTRO

On day for mothers, meet ALICE

Happy Mother's Day! I hope everyone has a wonderful day surrounded by all of your blessings. Take time and enjoy those memories from the past with your children and grandchildren. They will become treasured moments in the future.

Being a mom is not easy; as your children go through all the stages you think you will worry less, but you don't. When they're little, you worry about bumps and bruises. As they get older, you worry about their academics, sports and friends. You panic when they get behind the driver's wheel for the first time, and then your heart breaks as they leave for college. You pray that when they choose their vocation in life, it is the right choice. Then, comes the next chapter, you worry about their family life and children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren.

Thank you to all of the Mom's out there that put family first. Again, it is not easy. In today's world both parents have to work just to keep up with the bills and cost of living. Lots of families struggle to get by. The estimated U.S. Census report for 2026 shows that "the poverty rate for Webb County is approximately 20.6% to 21.3%. This is significantly higher than the Texas state average of 13.4% and the national average of 12.2%."

In 2023, according to the federal poverty level (FPL), 13% of Texas households were financially insecure. This measure does not consider an additional 29% of households that experience financial hardship. They are Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE). Households that have income above the federal poverty level, but not enough to afford basic expenses in

the county where they live.

Between ALICE households and those living in poverty, an estimated 42% of households in Texas were below the ALICE threshold. These individuals or families are forced to make impossible choices — like deciding whether to pay for utilities or a car repair, whether to buy food or fill a prescription.

For Webb County, it is estimated that there are 83,045 households with a median income of \$60,204. Approximately, 21% of those households live in poverty while another 28% earn more than the poverty level, but less than the basic cost of living in the county. This means that 49% of the families living in Webb County are struggling. The information on ALICE and the statistics for Webb County were taken from unitedforalice.org.

The website highlights a "point-in-time-data" report for 2023. While conditions have improved for some households, many continue to struggle, especially as wages fail to keep pace with the rising costs of housing, child care, food, transportation, healthcare and more. Households below the ALICE threshold — ALICE plus those in poverty — cannot afford the basic essentials. As circumstances change, households may find themselves below or above the ALICE threshold at different times. The report indicates that financial hardship is not equally distributed: overall, the ethnic group with the largest population below the ALICE Threshold tends to be the largest demographic group. In Webb County, almost 50% of the Hispanic households fit that category.

In Texas, the ALICE research was a collaboration of several local

United Ways and the United Ways of Texas. United Ways of Texas (UWT) is a nonprofit organization created in 1980. It is a state association for all of the local United Ways in the state of Texas. They provide statewide collaboration by equipping approximately 70 organizations with resources to achieve their missions and meet their communities most pressing needs.

UWT's work focuses on both building local United Way organizational capacity and enhancing the impact of local United Ways in their respective communities. Their vision: United for a future where all Texans thrive. Their mission: To strengthen and support the work and impact of local United Ways in Texas.

The ALICE Project came about because "United Way sought a research-based model to fully understand and respond to the needs of our communities. The ALICE methodology was conceived to develop real-time data on income and expenses, establishing a more comprehensive analysis of the state of financial instability in our communities. The project began in 2009 in New Jersey with 17 participating states."

Why does ALICE Matter? "ALICE workers are essential to the fabric of our society. ALICE works in jobs that are integral to our communities, from child care, educators and home health aides to mechanics — all workers we rely on every day. The future success of our communities is directly tied to the financial stability of ALICE households. When ALICE suffers and is forced to make difficult choices, we all face serious consequences."

The ALICE report helps us understand why so

many nonprofit organizations in our community are struggling to keep up with the demand for services, the food insecurities for so many families, the difficulty with making monthly rent, mortgage and utility payments with the rising costs of gasoline and groceries. The difficult decisions people have to make when it comes to purchasing medications or health treatment costs.

What can you do to help? Get involved. Volunteer at an event or for an agency. Donate to the cause of your choice. The possibilities are endless. For more information on United Ways of Texas or ALICE, visit www.uw-texas.org/alice-texas. For information on resources in our community, dial 2-1-1 or visit www.211texas.org.

Mark your calendars

You Are Not Alone 988: Take a break, we got your hair

The Barber Education Academy in cooperation with the Area Health Education Center (AHEC) will be offering free haircuts every Thursday from May 7 to May 28 from 4 to 6 p.m. at 1505 Calle Del Norte Suite 230 in Laredo.

Imaginarium of South Texas: Light Up The Night

Join us for the AEP Free Family Night on Friday, May 15, 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.

Laredo Main Street: Farmers market

The next Farmer's Market will be happening on Saturday, May 16, from 11 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 Farmers Market is the place to be. For more information, email: lmsevents01@gmail.com.

Laredo Stroke Support: Annual Salsa Bowl Tournament

Bowlers looking to hit the lanes for a good cause? You are invited to take a part in the Laredo Stroke Support's Annual Salsa Bowl Tournament on Saturday, May 16, at Jett Bowl North from 12:30- 3 p.m. Teams of five are \$200. For more information, visit laredostrokesupport.org.

LULAC: Orgullo Latino Legacy Award

Webb Co. LULAC Council #22387 in collaboration with the South Texas Latino Coalition, a 501(c)(3) organization will be hosting their 2026 Orgullo Latino Legacy Award. This annual fundraiser enables them to provide scholarships to high school students within the Laredo/Webb Co. area. This year's honorees are Rafael Gutierrez, FARO Wealth Companies; The Honorable Diana Saldana, United States District Judge and Allie's Bird Project, Non-Profit Organization. The event will be held on Thursday, May 21. For tickets or sponsorship information, contact Manuel Vinals at 956-394-9950 or email OrgulloLatino@webb-countylulac.org.

Area Health Education Center (AHEC): Know Lupus

AHEC invites all health

providers to a presentation by Dr. Antonio E. Manceira, rheumatologist, to a free virtual education presentation on the signs and symptoms of lupus. The session is scheduled for Thursday, May 28, from noon to 2 p.m. on Zoom. CEUs will be awarded to physicians and offered at no cost to pre-registered participants. For more information, call 956-712-0037.

Imaginarium Of South Texas: HEB Free Family Fun Night

Join us for the H-E-B Free Family Fun Night on Friday, May 29, 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.

Mercy Ministries: Bingo Madness

Come join the Bingo Madness and support the Mercy Clinic. Their 5th annual Bingo will be held on Sunday, June 7, at the Laredo College Maravillo Gym located on West End Washington Street. Doors open at 11 a.m. with two early bird specials at noon. The regular bingo begins at 1 p.m. Pre-sale tickets are \$30 for 10 games. On the day of the event, ticket price will be \$35. There will be food, door prizes and a raffle. For more information, contact Diana Rossell Granados at 956-721-7408 or diana.granados@mercy.net.

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

Peggy M. Duncan United Way of Laredo Executive Director

YOUR OPINION

Better to prevent than to lament — reject the border wall

City leaders seem to be struggling to make a decision which could be simple if they could imagine Laredo in 20 or more years.

About 80 years ago, city leaders rejected a proposal by H. B. Zachry to maximize Laredo's natural water resources into a scenic riverwalk. Zachry, a professional engineer, gave up on Laredo and presented a similar plan to San Antonio leaders and transformed its natural water resources into what is now the famous, scenic San Antonio River Walk.

What you decide regarding the border wall, as representative of all of our citizens, can have serious consequences, not simply for a beautification project or a tourist attraction, but, in this case, for the livelihood of the population.

The Rio Grande International Study Center commissioned the expertise of Dr. Mark Tompkins, a fluvial geomorphologist with 30 years of

experience. Dr. Tompkins report clearly documents the potential risks briefly delineated here:

- Floods will be higher and faster;
- Debris will increase;
- Wall sections will fail;
- There will be threats to life and property;
- Danger to bridges.

I had never heard about this profession, a fluvial geomorphologist, so I looked it up. A fluvial geomorphologist is a scientist who studies the physical processes, forms and changes in rivers and streams, analyzing how water, sediment, and debris interact to shape landscapes. Fluvial geomorphologists evaluate erosion, transport sediment residues, and design restoration projects to manage flood risks and improve river ecosystems. I definitely value and respect this scientist's evaluation.

The U.S. government plans to install 108 miles of border wall and 153 miles of river buoys in Webb

and Zapata counties. It includes all riverfront land in Laredo, which the federal government said it intends to seize from the city, other public entities, and private landowners via eminent domain. Eminent domain is the acquisition of private property for public use.

For access to Tompkins' report, readers may reach out to the Rio Grande International Study Center or find it online.

The federal government has a history of mishaps when it comes to environmental concerns; I hope you would study carefully and judiciously as to what is best for our community for the present and the future of the population beyond our lifetimes.

For example, Laredo has not successfully addressed serious concerns such as: air pollution, especially ethylene oxide from industrial emissions; poor air quality from trade and trucking; and the Rio Grande River chronic poor sewage infrastructure

issues. To our dismay, we have experienced "water boil notices" and will likely face again.

The sterilization plant in west Laredo has been identified as one of the most dangerous in the U. S. for cancer risk because it emits ethylene oxide, which is a highly carcinogenic gas. This private business is located near a school and neighborhoods.

The Rio Grande River's major pollution problems include untreated sewage, agricultural runoff and industrial discharge. The federal government has been lax in its enforcement and slow in investing in infrastructure. These are not single "events" but chronic, systemic issues where federal agencies play a major role in funding, regulation, and binational coordination.

The border wall will have major implications for the quality of our water and potentially much more serious consequences. Why is the federal

government waiving environmental laws to speed construction of a border wall which will be destructive to local habitat, disruptive to wildlife migration and causing flood risks to parts of South Texas?

There are many individuals who are rejecting the border wall, not necessarily because of the potential harms but because it is not a proven effective method to deter illegal crossings, the stated goal of the federal government. I encourage and welcome anyone to make that case.

It is sad and ironic that our city, with two medical doctors on City Council and two Council members with familial ties to medical doctors, is among the least healthy cities in the nation. What are city leaders prioritizing if not the wellbeing, safety and prosperity of its population?

I ask you to study the direction that this current administration is taking. The Trump administra-

tion is asking for an unprecedented \$1.5 trillion for defense or should I say, for *war*, specifically for the re-named Department of *War!* There is power in words. The mindset between "defense" and "war" is alarmingly serious. This administration has alienated our allies and disrupted our international standing and not for the better. What other *war* are they planning next with \$1.5 trillion dollars?

Administrations come and go. When they go, and they will go, there is no one to take responsibility for their actions. Hopefully, you, our city leaders, will decide against the border wall and oppose it because it is what is best for our own health and wellbeing now and into the future.

Decisions have consequences. Lamenting is useless and unproductive and it is simply not good enough. This is my plea to our city leaders to reject the proposed border wall.

Respectfully, Cecilia Garza

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.