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CUIDANDO LO NUESTRO

Legacy of Literacy Volunteers lives on

By Peggy M. Duncan



Happy Sunday! The idiom "here today, gone tomorrow" reminds us that trends or fads lose their popularity, people and relationship come and go, and that life in general is a bit uncertain. A couple of weeks ago, Literacy Volunteers of Laredo had its last "recognition event." They honored their students' achievements, the volunteer tutors' commitment, the support of their donors and the leadership of their board.

Literacy Volunteers of Laredo (LVL) is officially dissolving as a nonprofit organization in our community. For about 40 years, they have provided free literacy courses to adults with limited reading, writing, and/or English skills. They also offered courses for basic computer skills, creative writing, conversational English and civic courses for those seeking U.S. citizenship. All classes are coordinated by volunteer teachers. People who give of their time, talent and expertise to help enrich others.

My thanks to Board President Leticia Rios Spillane, Board Secretary Cecilia Hodges and all the LVL Board of Directors for their dedication to keep the agency's mission moving forward. For over a year, they have attempted to keep their agency above water, sacrificing their time, finances and jobs so LVL would remain open and providing services to help their students.

Their board members include: Spillane (president); Mary Provence (vice president); Hodges (secretary); Sandra Barrera (co-treasurer); Enriqueta Benavides (co-treasurer); Guillermo Benavides; Dr. Alicia Carrillo; Raj Chekuri; Hugo Garcia; Mary Lou Lopez; and Victor D. Trevino Jr.

Last year, Spillane reached out to United Way of Laredo President Carolyn M. Schmies, as she had also been a past president for LVL. The United Way of Laredo Board agreed that the services LVL provided were vital to our community. Both organizations came to a mutual agreement. Schmies was a passionate about the literacy program, her students and United Way. Although Schmies passed away in December, the United Way of Laredo Board remains committed to continuing to offer the literacy classes as a program service. Gloria E. Vasquez was recently hired as the program coordinator for United Way of Laredo.

Vasquez shared, "The LVL Recognition Ceremony was such a wonderful event. The attendees signed in as students, tutors, volunteers, sponsors or guests. All attendees were assigned to a designated seating area so that the distribution of certificates, plaques, or recognitions flowed smoothly. Everyone was wearing their Sunday best. Various group pictures were taken and shared before, during, and after the event. The invited family members and friends sat in their seats, waiting for their LVL student and family member to go in front of the audience to share in their achievement and shining moment."

She added, "The students looked excited and pleased to have met their class goals and to be receiving a certificate for their participation. A few of them deserved extra recognition for having perfect attendance. This is important to acknowledge, as some of these students had to make sacrifices in order to attend class without fail. The student participants each have work and family obligations, yet strive to make a better life for themselves and their families. This is also acknowledged by the tutors, who nominate one student for either most improved, or outstanding achievement awards. One student gets recognized as Student of the Year for his/her dedication and progress in meeting their goals. This year's nominee was Jose Maya from Leticia Spillane's Citizenship class."



Zach Davis/Laredo Morning Times

Cuidando Lo Nuestro is a weekly community spotlight presented in partnership with United Way of Laredo, highlighting local service, volunteer efforts and resources for families.

Vasquez noted, "The tutors are recognized for making sacrifices, as well. One volunteer tutor gets recognized as Tutor-of-the-Year, for his/her commitment and dedication. Volunteers are the heart of the organization. Without the tutors, there would not be a program. This year's nominee was Jill Davidson, English as a Second Language (ESL) tutor. Ms. Davidson has been with the LVL program since 2015. She has shared so much of her time and knowledge to hundreds of students.

"The sponsors also get recognized for their contributions to the program. These contributions are incredibly valuable to help us succeed. The City of Laredo Public Library allow the use of classroom space at their various locations. Funding entities supply materials, operational assistance, and other resources to help prepare students for their classes. Without this support, the program would be unable to provide the service. Our thanks for their continued support," she continued.

Vasquez closed by stating, "This past May's LVL Annual Recognition Ceremony event was enjoyed by all attendees. I am excited about the future and look forward to continue working with the students, tutors and sponsors through the United Way of Laredo-ProLiteracy of South Texas program."

United Way is excited to offer the literacy classes as a new program service. We are extremely grateful to Spillane, Hodges, the students, tutors, sponsors and city of Laredo Public Library leadership (Danielle Burns) who are helping to ensure a smooth transition. We are also excited to work with our UWL ProLiteracy of South Texas Advisory Board members: William B. Green; Dr. Sylvia Rios; Dr. James O'Meara; Ysela M. Arechiga; and Jonathan P. Ruiz.

If you are interested in volunteering as a tutor or are wanting to sign up for classes in the fall, please email gloria@unitedwaylaredo.org.

Mark your calendars

SOUTH TEXAS BLOOD & TISSUE BLOOD DRIVE: BATTLE OF THE BADGES

Everyone is invited to come out and support the Laredo Fire Department Blood Drive and the Laredo Police Department blood drive.

On Monday, June 1, from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. It will be at the Laredo Fire Department Conference Room located at 616 E. Del Mar Blvd. Contact Herman Martinez at hmartinez2@ciladero.tx.us for more information or to schedule your appointment.

On Tuesday, June 2, from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. the blood drive will be at the Laredo Police Department located at 4712 Maher (lobby area). Contact Leticia Garcia at lgarcia@ci.laredo.tx.us for more information or to schedule your appointment.

R.B. COWL REHABILITATION CENTER: CHILDREN'S ORTHOPEDIC CLINIC

Ruthe B. Cowl Rehabilitation Center will be hosting their monthly Children's Orthopedic Clinic on Thursday, June 4. Registration is required. To schedule an appointment, call 956-722-2431.

AREA HEALTH EDUCATION CENTER (AHEC): MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

Everyone is invited to attend AHEC's mental health awareness virtual seminar with guest speaker, Myrthala de Alejo, MA, LPC, DPC. The session is scheduled for Friday, June 5, from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. Participants will earn one Knowledge Contact Hour. For more information, call 956-712-0037.

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 starts 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 Granados at 956-721-7408 or diana.granados@mercy.net.

SACRED HEART CHILDREN'S HOME: CONSECRATION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

The Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus invite the community to join them with their festivities for the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Novena (Prayer) at 7 p.m. every night from Wednesday, June 3, to Thursday, June 11, at the Children's Home. The consecration will be on Friday, June 12, at 7:30 p.m. at the Children's Home. For more information, call 956-691-8746

IMAGINARIUM OF SOUTH TEXAS: GALA NIGHT HONORING DR. RICARDO CIGARROA & THE HONORABLE ALYSSA CIGARROA

The gala is scheduled for Thursday, June 11, from 6:30-10:30 p.m. at Paseo Real Reception Hall. For more information, please call 956-728-0404.

IMAGINARIUM OF SOUTH TEXAS: LIGHT UP THE NIGHT

Join us for the AEP Free Family Night on Friday, June 12, 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.

UNITED WAY OF LAREDO, INC.: MAIN EVENT SPIRIT NIGHT FOR UNITED WAY

Come join the fun and support a great cause on Thursday, June 18, from 5-8 p.m. at the Main Event at Mall Del Norte. Twenty percent of all sales will be donated to United Way of Laredo for all activities, video games, food, gift cards and non-alcoholic beverage purchases. Just remember to place your itemized receipt in the "box by the Bowling Desk." For more information, call 956-723-9113.

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 956cuidandolonuestro@gmail.com.

Peggy M. Duncan is the executive director of United Way of Laredo.

OPINION

LISD launches 'Breaking Barriers' theme

By Guillermo Pro

As the 2025–26 school year comes to an end, I want to thank the community for continuing to uphold the values that make Laredo ISD "The Place to Be." The community's support has made LISD a truly special place to learn, teach, and grow.

My first year as superintendent ended on a high note with the graduation ceremonies of LISD's Class of 2026. Watching our graduates cross the stage at the Sames Auto Arena reminded me why we do this work. These are the same students who wore face masks, faced uncertainty and overcame countless obstacles to graduate with their parents cheering proudly from the stands. LISD students are resilient, accomplished, full of ganas, and ready to take on the world.

The final weeks of the school year were filled with wonderful celebrations, including Scholarship Nights, our highest-ever Teacher Incentive Allotment awards, retirement celebrations, Honor Society inductions, Teacher and Para-Professional of the Year recognitions and Memorial Day ceremonies. These events celebrated and acknowledged the contributions and achievements of LISD's students, faculty, and staff. The excellence and commitment demonstrated throughout the year were inspiring, and I commend all of them for their dedication.



David Gomez Jr./Laredo Morning Times

Laredo ISD Superintendent Guillermo Pro, shown at the Hector J. Garcia Early College High School, thanks the community for supporting the district.

As we enter the summer season, I would like to express my profound gratitude for the leadership and support provided by LISD's Board of Trustees, parents, employees, former students and community partners. Their continued support has been instrumental in helping us navigate a year marked by budget constraints and funding challenges while strengthening our district and ensuring its long-term success.

The summer months provide an opportunity for rest, recreation, and reflection. I encourage everyone to use this time to recharge and return for the 2026-27 school year with a renewed sense of purpose and community. As we move forward into a new school year, we do so under a new theme: Breaking Barriers.

Together, we will break through barriers to success and create even greater opportunities for our students, staff and community in 2026-27.

It is my honor and privilege to serve as the superintendent of LISD.

Guillermo Pro is the superintendent of Laredo ISD

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.