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Emergency prep, blood drives and helping others



Peggy M. Duncan
CUIDANDO LO NUESTRO

Hello June! Can you believe we are practically halfway through 2026? Now that school is out for the summer, most people get to relax a little bit more. Parents don't have to get up as early to make breakfast and avoid the traffic. Students get to stay up later than usual, sleep until noon and eat everything in the refrigerator. Keep in mind the various summer food programs available in the community. You can dial 2-1-1 and find your nearest location.

Summertime also means family vacations to Disney World, Universal Studios, the Wizarding World of Harry Potter, or time at the beach or simply lounge around the pool. Whatever your summer plans are, make sure you keep an eye on the weather because June 1 also marks the beginning of hurricane season. This is not my favorite time of year.

I have a great amount of respect and admiration for those people that deal with disaster situations. I do think people realize all the planning, training and preparation that happens getting ready for a hurricane event.

When we served as the South Texas 2-1-1 call center, it meant updating the database with emergency contact information for all the surrounding counties, constantly watching weather updates, listening to National Weather service updates, tracking road closures for evacuations, gathering shelter information, being on call 24/7 in case of an emergency, and lots of training.

My *respect* and *gratitude* to all first responders and emergency personnel. You are my heroes. You train for all sorts of crisis situations. It is not easy to remain calm when everything around you is in chaos. Yet you do it so well. You put the lives of others as a priority ... but always remember safety first.

Another important aspect of disaster preparedness is our community resources. Our hospital and medical personnel need our help. As you know, the worst time to prepare for a disaster is when you are right in the middle of an emergency. It's the same consideration for donating blood.

"Every blood donation has the power to save lives, but during the summer months, that impact becomes even more critical," says Yvonne Wheeler, blood drive development director of South Texas Blood & Tissue. "We encourage our community to step forward, schedule a donation and take that simple, lifesaving action. One donation can help up to three people — offering hope, healing and a second chance at life when it's needed most."

Donating blood is a gift of life, because you can save someone's life if they need blood. Many times, whether during needed surgery or because of a trauma-related accident, doctors may have to order a blood transfusion to save the life of their patient. You just never know if you are going to need blood during surgery or a medical procedure. To support those in need, the South Texas Blood & Tissue agency conducts hundreds of mobile blood drives every year.

We have a bunch of drives scheduled for June and July in our area. Albert Carmona, from the South Texas Blood & Tissue agency, sent me several of the scheduled locations:

- **June 18:** 9 a.m.-2 p.m. — Wal-Mart 2615 Bob Bullock Loop (bus mobile);
- **June 19:** 9 a.m.-2 p.m. — Jett Bowl North, 701 Gale (bus mobile);
- **June 22:** 11 a.m.-4 p.m. — Laredo Association of Realtors, 107 Calle del Norte Suite 21;
- **June 23:** 10 a.m.-3 p.m. — Laredo Association of Realtors, 107 Calle del Norte Suite 21;
- **June 25:** 9 a.m.-2 p.m. — Pep Boys Automotive, 4401 San Dario (bus mobile);
- **June 26:** 9 a.m.-2 p.m. — Chick-fil-a Marketplace 1916 Bob Bullock (bus mobile);
- **June 27:** 9 a.m.-2 p.m. — San Martin de Porres Parish, 1704 Sandman (bus mobile);
- **July 22:** 10 a.m.-3 p.m. — Laredo Chamber of Commerce, 5702 McPherson Suite 8 B;
- **July 23:** 9a.m.-2 p.m. — Wal-Mart, 2615 Bob Bullock Loop (bus mobile);
- **July 25:** 9a.m.-2 p.m. — PLA-MOR, 2819 Bob Bullock (bus mobile).

To learn more about making a blood donation, visit the STB&T website, SouthTexasBlood.org and look for tips "Before you donate, When you donate and After you donate." You can also find national guidelines that are followed by all blood centers.

Your eligibility is determined by the medications you take, travel, health conditions and lifestyle. To donate blood or platelets, you must be:

- At least 16 years old, weigh at least 120 pounds and present a parent signed consent form;
- Be 17 years or older, and weigh at least 110 pounds;
- Be in good general health.
- Present a valid photo identification.

Some medications can prevent you from donating temporarily or permanently. Their website provides a list of medications to determine if you are eligible to donate blood or platelets. You can also call their Donor Eligibility department at 210-731-5555 at extension 2243, Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

If you would like to schedule an appointment to make a blood donation at any of the upcoming locations, visit SouthTexasBlood.org or call 210-731-5590. You might even consider hosting a blood drive at your location. Give them a call to coordinate.

Just one last friendly reminder, make sure your family is always prepared for an emergency. Have an "emergency to-go bag" ready. You can find a list of essential items to include at the American Red Cross website redcross.org or at Ready.gov. Make sure to include your important documents, insurance, phone numbers and medications. You never know when you're going to need it. Make sure your family also has a security plan. Where to meet or how to check with each other in case you are separated in an emergency evacuation or situation.

Blessings.

Mark your calendars

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 & HONORABLE ALYSSA CIGARROA

The Gala is scheduled for Thursday, June 11, from 6:30-10:30 p.m. at Paseo Real Receptions. 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 at the main campus of Laredo College (West End Washington Street) Building P-149. For more information, please call 956-728-0404.

AREA HEALTH EDUCATION CENTER (AHEC): EVERY CANCER, EVERY STORY

AHEC invites everyone to a virtual presentation by the UT Health Mays Cancer Center. It is a series of conversations regarding Brain Cancer Awareness. The session is scheduled for Thursday, June 18, from 11a.m. to noon on Zoom. For more information, call 956-712-0037.

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 in Mall del Norte. 20% of all sales will be donated to United Way of Laredo for all activities, video games, food, gift cards and nonalcoholic beverage purchase. Just remember to drop your itemized receipt in the "drop box at the bowl desk to be included." For more information, call 956-723-9113.

LAREDO MAIN STREET: FARMERS MARKET

The next Farmer's Market will be happening on Saturday, June 20, from 11:00 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 Farmers Market is the place to be. For more information, email lmseventsol@gmail.com

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.

COMMENTARY

Democrats need better message for Hispanic voters

By David M. Drucker
BLOOMBERG OPINION

Hispanic voters are down on President Donald Trump, and a majority are poised to support Democratic candidates in midterm elections this fall. But that doesn't mean this crucial bloc is coming home to Democrats — or that it's satisfied with the party's agenda.

Democrats are leading the generic ballot gauging which party Hispanic voters would prefer to control the House of Representatives, 54% to 27%, according to a recent national survey of 3,000. But the analysis, conducted by both Democratic and Republican pollsters for UnidosUS, also shows that Hispanic support has a soft underbelly that could cost the party votes in the midterm elections and reduce chances of winning the speaker's gavel (and flipping the U.S. Senate.)

"Both parties are underperforming," Clarissa Martinez De Castro, vice president of the Latino Vote Imitative at UnidosUS, told me. The difference, she added, is that Hispanic Republicans are quite enthusiastic about their candidates, while a plurality of their Democrat counterparts and other Hispanics who tend to vote for Democrats are rather indifferent about their choices. These voters view their 2026 participation more as showing up for their community than increasing the Democratic Party's power on Capitol Hill. "Democrats, if they want to be successful, they need to talk to (Hispanic voters), and they need to energize them," she explained.

Whether Democrats heed these warning signs could decide the balance of power in Washington. The party needs 60%-plus of the Hispanic vote in the midterm elections to win both congressional majorities.

The battle for control of the House is playing out in fewer competitive seats in the aftermath of the Republicans' redistricting gambit and a Supreme Court decision that overturned a key portion of the Voting Rights Act. And the fight for the Senate majority is occurring in mostly red states. Even in a political environment growing so toxic for Republicans that the Senate race in perennially red Texas is now rated a tossup, Democrats must maximize turnout if they want to flip the seats they need. That's especially true among Hispanics, who are significant constituencies not just in Texas but North Carolina, Colorado, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

The demographic did pivot toward Trump after frustration with the economy under President Joe Biden. But nearly 17 months after Trump's return to power, they're still unhappy — only 15% say they are financially "comfortable," according to the UnidosUS poll. In fact, Hispanics have swung left in dozens of recent local, state and special congressional elections since the president assumed office again.



Luke Johnson/San Diego Union-Tribune

Voters in San Diego come to cast their ballots, register to vote and update their registration.

To capitalize on the moment, Democrats first have to disabuse themselves of the notion that this is just a return to normal. It is, in fact, a swing. Second, the party must improve its messaging on the economy to Hispanics, who, like most Americans, prioritize this issue above all others.

The mistake Democrats often make is to assume Hispanic voters are looking for government programs to ensure their financial well-being. What most want from Washington, Martinez De Castro explained, are policies that lead to economic opportunities they can seize and sustain for themselves. It's about pride and contributing to the prosperity of their families, their communities and their country.

"Rightly or wrongly, there's a sense that Democrats are more about: 'I'm going to help you because you need help, by putting government as the actor in the story,'" Martinez De Castro said. Instead, Hispanics would like to see proposals that include raising the minimum wage and creating jobs, she said.

To be sure, Trump isn't doing well with Hispanic voters. And that's putting it mildly. More than two-thirds (67%) disapprove of the president's job performance, and 25% of the Hispanic voters who helped put him in office would not mark their ballot for him "if they could do it over again," according to the poll. Even in Florida, typically a hotbed of Hispanic support for Republicans, Trump is underwater, at 51% disapproval. The numbers mirror Americans' cratering support for the president in general over their disappointment with wage stagnation, the Iran war and immigration enforcement.

But so far, none of this is translating to Democrats running up the score with Hispanic voters. That's not at all surprising to Daniel Garza, president of LIBRE Initiative, a conservative group that focuses on economic policy and Hispanic outreach. "Many Democrats seem to think a sense of dissatisfaction with the Trump administration is all that is needed for Latinos to swing back to them," he told me via text. "I just don't see Democrats changing that script."

He has a point.

If Democrats are going to maximize the Hispanic vote — and compete for congressional majorities — they're going to have to offer this bloc, 40% of whom are new to the electorate in the last four years, more than big government and identity politics.

David M. Drucker is a columnist covering politics and policy. He is also a senior writer for The Dispatch and the author of "In Trump's Shadow: The Battle for 2024 and the Future of the GOP."

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.