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Los Fresnos News

Your Community Newspaper, Serving Southern Cameron County

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City of Los Fresnos Abundant History

By Mike Villarreal

Los Fresnos, Texas, has a rich history that dates back to the US-Mexican War. The town was formed by merging four small communities - Los Cuates, Charco Hondo, Tres Norias, and Agua Negra - which were inhabited by Mexican settlers who had come to the area to work or settle down in ranches around the region.



In the early 1900s, the promise of railroad development in south Texas brought land speculators from the north into the area. One of these speculators was Lon C. Hill Jr, who bought 14,232 acres of the Espiritu Santo Land Grant and divided it into lots.

post office was opened, but it closed in 1921.

The first Methodist church was built in 1922, and the first scheduled train to Los Fresnos ran in 1927 on the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railway. The post office was reestablished in 1929. By 1931, Los Fresnos had an estimated population of 400 with 20 businesses, and by 1933, each community had its own church building.

During the 1940s and 50s, there was a growth spurt that increased the population to 1,113 and businesses to thirty by 1959. On September 1, 1970, the Olmito ISD was consolidated with the Los Fresnos ISD, and two years later, Las Yescas ISD followed suit.

Los Fresnos gained notoriety in the late 1980s from the Immigration and Naturalization Service

Los Fresnos Processing Center, which was located just outside the city. El Corralon (The Corral) was primarily used to house undocumented immigrants seeking work visas or potential asylum.

There used to be 7 cotton gins in and around the city of Los Fresnos, but today, only a few of them are still standing, with some only having their foundations to mark their history in Los

Fresnos. Despite this, the city remains vibrant and continues to grow, with a rich past and a promising future. Many people have contributed to the city's growth, and their efforts will always be remembered by those who have witnessed Los Fresnos's transformation.

Photos from Los Fresnos News Archive

Ciudad de Los Fresnos Abundante Historia

Los Fresnos, Texas, tiene una rica historia que se remonta a la guerra entre Estados Unidos y México. El pueblo se formó mediante la fusión de cuatro pequeñas comunidades: Los Cuates, Charco Hondo, Tres Norias y Agua Negra, que estaban habitadas por colonos mexicanos que habían llegado a la zona para

trabajar o establecerse en ranchos de la región.

A principios del siglo XX, la promesa del desarrollo ferroviario en el sur de Texas atrajo a especuladores de tierras del norte a la zona. Uno de estos especuladores fue Lon C. Hill Jr, quien compró 14,232 acres de la Concesión de Tierras del Espíritu Santo y los dividió

en lotes.

Los desarrolladores establecieron la ciudad de Los Fresnos en 1915. La ciudad recibió su nombre de los fresnos que crecían abundantemente en la zona. Ese año se construyeron una escuela y una iglesia comunitaria, que fueron compartidas por varias denominaciones hasta 1922. En 1919 se abrió la

primera oficina de correos, pero cerró en 1921.

La primera iglesia metodista se construyó en 1922, y el primer tren programado a Los Fresnos funcionó en 1927 en el ferrocarril San Antonio y Aransas Pass. La oficina de correos se restableció en 1929. En 1931, Los Fresnos tenía una población estimada de 400 habitantes con 20 negocios, y en 1933, cada comunidad tenía su propia iglesia.

Durante las décadas de 1940 y 1950, hubo un crecimiento acelerado que aumentó la población a 1,113 y las empresas a treinta en 1959. El 1 de septiembre de 1970, Olmito ISD se consolidó con Los Fresnos ISD, y dos años después, Las Yescas ISD siguió. traje.

Los Fresnos ganó notoriedad a finales de la década de 1980 gracias al Centro de Procesamiento de Los Fresnos del

Servicio de Inmigración y Naturalización, que estaba ubicado en las afueras de la ciudad. El Corralón se utilizó principalmente para albergar a inmigrantes indocumentados que buscaban visas de trabajo o posible asilo.

Solía haber 7 desmotadoras de algodón en y alrededor de la ciudad de Los Fresnos, pero hoy en día, solo unas pocas de ellas siguen en pie, y algunas solo tienen sus cimientos para marcar su historia en Los Fresnos. A pesar de esto, la ciudad sigue siendo vibrante y sigue creciendo, con un pasado rico y un futuro prometedor. Muchas personas han contribuido al crecimiento de la ciudad y sus esfuerzos siempre serán recordados por quienes han sido testigos de la transformación de Los Fresnos.

Fotos del Archivo de Noticias de Los Fresnos

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Museum Celebrates 150th Kentucky Derby Anniversary

By Mike Villarreal

The Brownsville Museum of Fine Arts is proud to announce that it will be hosting and celebrating the 150th anniversary of The Kentucky Derby on Saturday, May 4, 2024. This is an event you should not miss, as it promises to be an unforgettable evening of entertainment and fundraising. The Museum will be transformed into a stunning venue for the occasion, where guests can enjoy drinks and food, with doors opening at 4:30 pm and the Derby race being shown live at 5:45 pm.

The Kentucky Derby is an American grade 1 stakes race held annually on the first Saturday of May at Churchill Downs in Louisville, Kentucky. The race features 3-year-old thoroughbred horses racing at a distance of 1 ¼ miles (10 furlongs or 2,012 meters). Fillies carry 121 pounds, while colts carry 126 pounds. The race is considered one of the most prestigious events in American sport and is often called "The Most Exciting Two Minutes in Sports."

The Kentucky Derby is also the first leg of the Triple Crown, also known as "The Run for The Roses." The winner of the race is covered in a blanket of roses, hence the name. The Kentucky Derby is preceded by a two-week-long Kentucky Derby Festival, which includes events such as the Thunder Over

Louisville fireworks display, the Great Steamboat Race, and the Pegasus Parade.

The first Kentucky Derby race was held in 1875, and it has been held annually ever since, making it the oldest continuous sporting event in the United States. The race has only been rescheduled twice in its long history, once due to World War 2 and the second time due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Kentucky Derby and the Oaks are recognized as the oldest continuously held major sporting events in the U.S. and the oldest thoroughbred stakes race held in the same locale since its beginning.

Thoroughbred owners started sending their winning derby horses to compete in two other races, The Preakness Stakes and The Belmont Stakes, as they offered larger purses for these three races. The term "Triple Crown" came about in 1930 when Gallant Fry became the second horse to win all three races, and sportswriter Charles Hatton brought the phrase into American usage and households.

Since 1931, the order of the Triple Crown races has been the Kentucky Derby, Preakness Stakes, and finally, the Belmont Stakes. The first television coverage of the Kentucky Derby took place on May 7, 1949, and was produced by Wave-tv, the NBC affiliate in Louisville. In 1970, the first female jockey, Dianne Crump, rode in





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the derby, finishing 15th aboard Fathom.

The fastest time ever run in the Kentucky Derby is still held by the legendary "Secretariat," who set the record in 1973 at 1:59, breaking the previous record set by Northern Dancer in 1964. Over the years,

the Kentucky Derby has produced many other legendary horses and jockeys, including American Pharoah, California Chrome, and Bill Shoemaker.

The 2020 Kentucky Derby was postponed for only the second time in its history; due to the

COVID-19 pandemic, the Kentucky Derby was held from May 2 to September 5. The purse for the Kentucky Derby was increased to \$5 million dollars in January 2024., making it the largest purse in its long history. Don't miss out on this once-in-

a-lifetime opportunity to experience the excitement and tradition of The Kentucky Derby and to support the Brownsville Museum of Fine Arts.

Photo from the Brownsville Museum of Fine Art Facebook Page

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Contribuido por: Alvino Villarreal


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Public Notice

The Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) issued a Categorical Exclusion (CE) from a comprehensive environmental review on April 17, 2024, for the City of Los Fresnos, Stormwater Planning and Drainage Improvements Project, Whipple Road and Valle Alto Drainage Improvements in Cameron County, Texas, Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF), TWDB Project No. 73922. The full text and maps for the CE are available on the TWDB website at https://www.twdb.texas.gov/financial/reports/environmental_findings/index.asp.

Comments regarding this determination may be submitted to the Director of Regional Water Project Development, Texas Water Development Board, P.O. Box 13231, Austin, Texas 78711-3231 or via email at rwpd-environmental@twdb.texas.gov.

Los Fresnos Business Directory

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THE STATE OF TEXAS 2024-DCL-01773

Luis Antonio Sanchez de Tagle Martinez § IN THE 357TH DISTRICT COURT
VS § OF
Christina Francis Olache § CAMERON COUNTY, TEXAS

TO: **The Unknown Heirs of Christina Francis Olache and Eduardo Jimenez Olache, and All other persons claiming interest in land under deed heretofore given to Christina Francis Olache and Eduardo Jimenez Olache of Cameron County, Texas, as Grantees**

NOTICE TO DEFENDANT: "You have been sued. You may employ an attorney. If you or your attorney do not file a written answer with the clerk who issued this citation by 10:00 am on the Monday next following the expiration of 42 days after the date this citation was issued, a default judgment may be taken against you. In addition to filing a written answer with the clerk, you may be required to make initial disclosures to the other parties of this suit. These disclosures generally must be made no later than 30 days after you file your answer with the clerk. Find out more at TexasLawHelp.org."

You are hereby commanded to appear by filing a written answer to the Plaintiff's Original Petition at or before 10:00 o'clock A.M. on the Monday next after the expiration of 42 days after the date of issuance of this citation before the Honorable 357th District Court of Cameron County, at the Courthouse in said County in Brownsville, Texas. Said Plaintiff's Original Petition was filed in said court on the 26th day of March, 2024 in the above entitled cause.

A brief statement of the nature of this suit is as follows, to-wit:
Declaratory Judgment action and Trespass to Try Title action concerning 1.0 Acre of land out of the South 5.0 Acres of Block 15, OLMITO GARENS SUBDIVISION, as recorded in the Cameron County Map Records Volume 6, Page 41, Cameron County, Texas
as is more fully shown by Plaintiff's Original Petition on file in this suit.

Issued and given under my hand and seal of said Court at Brownsville, Texas, on this the 15th day of April, 2024.

ATTORNEY:
Hector Daniel Picazo
24091509
956-546-3731
3505 Boca Chica Blvd Suite 100
Brownsville TX 78521



Laura Perez-Reyes
District Clerk of Cameron County
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By: *Brenda M Ramirez*
Brenda Ramirez, Deputy Clerk 4/15/2024 8:41:40 AM

Letter from Dr. Hilda Silva, Candidate Place 7, TSC Board of Trustees

Dear Texas Southmost College Community,
I ask for your support as I seek election to serve in Place 7 on the Texas Southmost College Board of Trustees. I am confident I have the experience, skills and passion needed to be a strong member of this Board that can play a pivotal role in meeting the educational needs of our community. I bring 43 years of experience in higher education to the TSC Board. I began my career at Texas Southmost College in 1980 as a Counselor. I worked in various roles while at TSC and later at UTB/TSC as the Vice President for Student Affairs.

I would like for the Board to work with the administration and focus on transparent student success outcomes such as graduation and passing rates of our programs.

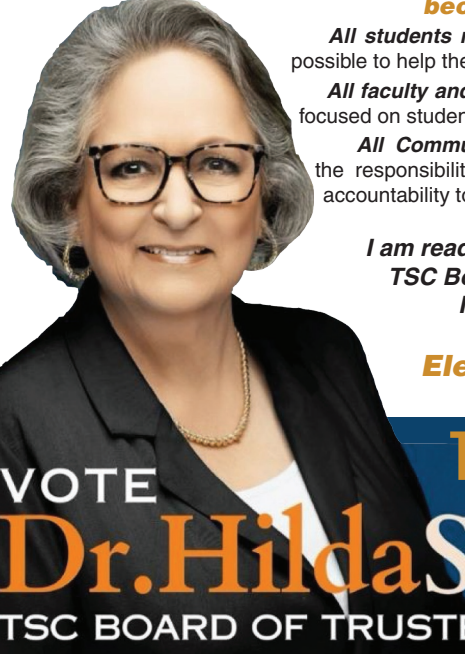
Together, this Board can work with the TSC administration to ensure that we are actively seeking grant funding this college is eligible to apply for and, to date, has made only one attempt to apply.

Bottom line, I want to be a member of this Board because I truly believe that:

- All students matter.** We have a responsibility to do everything possible to help them succeed as they prepare for jobs and careers.
- All faculty and staff matter.** They must be part of a team that is focused on student success. They must know that they are valued.
- All Communities and Taxpayers Matter.** The college has the responsibility to produce work-ready graduates and provide accountability to the citizenry.

I am ready and I look forward to serving on the TSC Board in Place 7, but I need your help. I respectfully ask for your vote.

Election Day is on May 4th.



VOTE
Dr. Hilda Silva for
TSC BOARD OF TRUSTEES, PLACE 7

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LOS FRESNOS SPORTS

9 Ways to Support Mental Wellness



StatePoint

When it comes to overall wellness, focusing on mental health is critical, especially for older adults, according to experts. “As people age, they may experience stressors such as serious illness, losing close friends and family members, managing life on a fixed income, and coping with concerns about their own mortality. While seniors may show resilience to these dimensions of vitality, when they’re

compounded, these losses and stressors can result in a myriad of behavioral health issues, including depression, anxiety, stress, and insomnia,” says Dr. Lindsay Evans-Mitchell, board certified adult psychiatrist and behavioral health medical director for Cigna Healthcare’s Medicare Advantage business. Dementia, which includes memory loss and language difficulties, is another issue often more pronounced with age, and in earlier stages, it

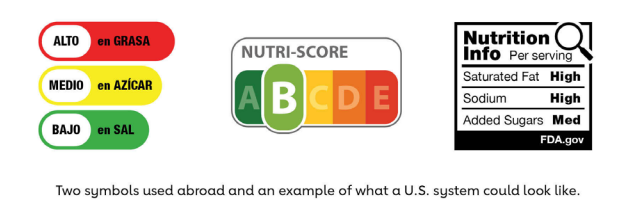
can often mimic some symptoms of depression. Fortunately, Dr. Evans-Mitchell says making healthy choices can improve your quality of life, including your overall mental well-being, and potentially reduce your risk of both depression and dementia: **Practice good nutrition:** There is evidence that plant-based diets are associated with better health, including better emotional health. That’s another reason to add more green, leafy vegetables to

your diet. **Exercise:** Regular exercise can positively affect cognitive ability. If you have a Medicare Advantage (MA) plan offering access to a fitness program at no extra cost, then make sure to take advantage of it. You can learn about Cigna Healthcare’s MA plans at cignamedicareinformation.com. **Hydrate:** Drink plenty of water. Dehydration can negatively affect cognitive performance. Even mild dehydration can drain energy and cause fatigue. **Enjoy some sunshine:** Sunlight provides needed vitamin D. Getting sunshine may increase your serotonin and help you stave off depression caused by Seasonal Affective Disorder, or SAD. Also, according to the Alzheimer’s Association, exposure to vitamin D can lower dementia risk by as much as 40%. Of course, make sure to take proper precautions, such as wearing a hat, using sunscreen, and wearing

eye protection that shields against UV light. **Get plenty of rest:** Older adults need seven to nine hours of sleep each night, according to the National Institutes of Health. People who get six hours of sleep or less a night are at greater risk of developing dementia later, the organization says. Additionally, poor sleep could be a sign of depression and should be discussed with your doctor. **Stay away from harmful substances:** Dealing with behavioral health issues in unhealthy ways, such as abusing prescription or illicit drugs or alcohol, will only worsen the situation. According to the National Institutes of Health, research shows heavy alcohol use can increase the risk of both dementia and depression. **Pick up a hobby:** Hobbies like gardening, cooking and solving puzzles can help improve your memory and your physical and mental health. **Be social:** Isolation can lead to depression, which only worsened for many

during the COVID-19 pandemic. Reach out to friends and family in person, via video chat, or over the telephone. **Find help if you need it:** Keep your regular medical appointments, and don’t hesitate to seek additional help from your network, if you need it. This may take the form of a financial advisor, a clergy member, or a mental health professional. Medicare generally covers the cost of behavioral health services, including depression and addiction treatment, as well as talk therapy. Virtual services are often available to those living in rural areas. And if you’re experiencing a crisis that includes suicidal thoughts, call 988 immediately. “For some older adults, seeking help can be difficult,” says Dr. Evans-Mitchell. “But getting help is a sign of strength, not weakness. There’s no benefit to suffering in silence when help to improve your life is within reach.”

Confused by Nutrition Labels? You’re Not Alone



(StatePoint) Shopping for groceries can be like navigating a maze: so many choices in every aisle, food packages covered in marketing claims and little direction on what is truly healthy and what isn’t. People want to make healthy choices for themselves and their families, but how can they

when the information available to them can be so overwhelming? For years, the Nutrition Facts label on the back of food packages has provided important nutrition information, such as the amount of calories, fat, sodium, sugar, protein and vitamins and minerals. But all the numbers can be confusing, and they’re

not readily visible. Given America’s high rates of diet-related disease and illness, advocates say that more must be done to make sure consumers have the information they need to make healthy choices.

That’s why the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which sets standards for nutrition labeling, is developing a new labeling system that would appear on the front of food and beverage products, offering clear and concise information to help people quickly and easily identify healthier foods. Research from other countries shows that front-of-pack labeling helps consumers make healthier purchases and even gets manufacturers to make healthier products. What could a front-of-

pack label look like? More than 40 countries already require it. Some countries use stoplight colors like red, yellow and green, or a grading system like a report card — A, B, C, D, E — to indicate how healthy a product is. Other countries use a warning system that indicates whether products include high amounts of added sugars, saturated fat or sodium. Approaches like these make it easy for consumers to understand with a quick glance what’s healthy and what’s not. The success of front-of-pack labeling in other countries suggests it will help people in the United States make healthier choices that can improve well-being and reduce high rates of diet-related diseases, including some

forms of heart disease and cancer. In fact, the National Academy of Medicine (formerly the Institute of Medicine) recommended such a system more than 10 years ago, and national polls show most Americans support it. The FDA plans to release a proposal for a front-of-pack food labeling system in the United States that can get everyone out of the food shopping maze. To stay informed and learn more, visit yourethecure.org/FOP. “Clear, concise front-of-pack nutrition labeling is the answer. After all, grocery shopping shouldn’t require a degree in nutrition,” says Nancy Brown, CEO of the American Heart Association.



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Win Cash for College by Being Crafty and Creative

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Calling all crafty high schoolers and creative home schoolers from across the United States and Canada! An annual scholarship contest that challenges college-bound students to create their dream prom dress or tux out of duct tape is now accepting submissions through June.

The 24th annual Duck Brand Stuck at Prom Scholarship Contest is offering the largest rewards in its history. With bigger grand prize scholarships—\$15,000 for the top dress and tux designs—and new cool categories, including a judge's choice award, there is more than \$40,000 up for grabs.

"Over the course of two decades, we have presented more than a half-million dollars in scholarships to contest participants," said Kerry Haugh, director of product

marketing at Shurtape Technologies, LLC, the company that markets the Duck brand. "This year's

prizes are bigger than ever in an effort to foster creativity and encourage Duck Tape designers to

be bold and embrace their individuality."

For important contest details and official rules,

visit StuckAtProm.com.

Are you a designer who has what it takes to handcraft your prom attire?

Enter your dazzling dress or tremendous tux from now until June 5 for a chance to win big.

STUCK AT PROM SCHOLARSHIP CONTEST

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LAST WEEK'S SUDOKU ANSWERS

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LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORDS ANSWERS

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THEME: FICTIONAL MOTHERS

ACROSS

1. Bars
6. Escape or flee
9. Green gemstone or Heather Graham in "The Hangover"
13. Turning point
14. 34th U.S. Pres
15. Actress Sophia
16. Each and all
17. Lake, in France
18. Roof overhangs
19. *Lovable mother of seven in "Harry Potter" Mrs. _____
21. *Mother in "The Terminator," Sarah _____
23. Not safe, in baseball
24. "Hold on!"
25. Uno _____, in Mexico
28. Iranian monarch
30. Be a go-between
35. Kind of cuckoos
37. Passing mention
39. Dwelled
40. TV show " _____ 911!"
41. *"Beloved" mother
43. Like a tennis skirt
44. Scottish kinship groups
46. Spare in car
47. Email folder
48. Vertical dimension
50. Turf alternative
52. Morse Code dash
53. Hippocratic _____

DOWN

1. Do like volcano
2. Honey home
3. Iris holder
4. Human trunk
5. iPad "pen"
6. *Matriarch, _____ Munster of "The Munsters"
7. *Nadezhda of "The Americans," _____ Elizabeth Jennings, acr.
8. Muhammad's birthplace
9. Melissa Rivers' mom
10. Australian slang for afternoon
11. Widely hunted ruminant
12. Follow ems
15. A particular legume
20. Not pathos
22. Second O in EVOO
24. Kinda white
25. *Mrs. _____, a.k.a. Marmee
26. Anoint
27. Red Sea peninsula
29. Drive a getaway car, e.g.
31. Goals
32. Like a Harvard building?
33. Plant-based laxative
34. * _____ Bunker, mom to Gloria in "All in the Family"
36. Dance partner
38. Drive-_____, for short
42. Like a haunted house
45. Daisy dukes, e.g.
49. _____ chi
51. Casts a line
54. Popular electric car
56. Newton's first name
57. Foul substance
58. Matured
59. Bob of "The Joy of Painting" fame
60. Better than never?
61. On top of
62. "High" time
63. Cosine's counterpart
64. In the past
66. *"Married... with Children" mom

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Which leash is attached to the dog?

Drawing Tutorial How to Draw a Dolphin

1. Start with a simple curved line for the back.
2. Add a small fin on the back.
3. Draw the head and a small eye.
4. Add a dorsal fin and a tail.
5. Color the dolphin in light blue.
6. Final shaded drawing of a dolphin.

Spot the Difference Can you find 7 differences between the two scenes?

Start!

Finish!

LFHS Class of 04 - 20th Class Reunion



**Iris Garcia
Special to LFN**

This year, 2024, marks twenty years since the Los Fresnos High School Class of 2004 walked the stage to receive their diploma at the Leo Aguilar Memorial Stadium, and were sent off into the “real world”. Twenty years since they last walked the halls of their beloved high school as students in their once cool maroon varsity letterman jackets. A time when there were only two middle schools, Resaca Middle School or Los Cuates Middle School, and there was no such thing as a 9th-grade campus. There was only one traffic light, maybe two, and no Whataburger or Walmart in town. Not to mention, the concept of Facebook was about to change the social world. The small town of Los Fresnos has come a long way since, and so has the graduating class of 2004. To memorialize this momentous occasion, a class reunion was organized by a committee

of alumni. Mrs. Cilia I. Flores, a committee member, shared that the goal was to get as many of the alumni together as possible. She said, “Twenty years is a long time and such a great opportunity to have our classmates catch up and get back in touch with the town of Los Fresnos and each other.” A Facebook group was created by Joel Gomez, an alumnus who got the ball rolling, and as some would say, “made everyone self-aware of how old they were getting” when they received the group invite. The group was helpful in getting input from fellow alumni and voting on a date for the reunion, which was set to be on Friday, April 19th. As ideas for the reunion were tossed around about where to host the event and what activities to do, it came down to funding. Mrs. Flores went into action, with the help of other alumni, and organized fundraisers. They managed to raise enough to rent the Los Fresnos community

center, purchase food/snacks, and to help book a fellow classmate who is a professional DJ. To continue the road down memory lane, on Saturday, April 20th, the Class of 2004, also had the opportunity to tour the Los Fresnos High School campus, with the help and approval of Principal Stambaugh. A lot of work, effort, and, time went into making it happen, and Mrs. Cilia credits it to a team effort. She shared that her favorite part was “seeing everyone’s ecstatic smiles, laughter and mingling. Like we never left school and picked up where we left off.” Lastly, as a little takeaway and to provide more insight on the Class of 2004, I asked the former students two questions,

1. What has been the biggest lesson you’ve learned since graduating high school? And,
2. What was the best part of attending Los Fresnos HS?

And these were some of their answers:
 “Biggest lesson I’ve learned since graduating high school: You never stop learning! No matter what path you take after high school, the lessons keep coming even when you’re not in school.
 The best part about attending LFHS: Los Fresnos is a small town with a big heart, and that to me was the best part about attending LFHS. We continue to be a community/family that looks out for one another and supports each other.” - Amanda Buendia Martinez, Class of 2004
 “The biggest lesson I’ve learned since graduating high school is that it doesn’t matter where you were from or what you had, but how hard you worked to follow your dreams. Life is about continuous learning and finding out your passion. What in life makes us happy and fulfills us. There will be many obstacles along the way. There will be many times we might fail and not get it our way. The important thing is to never give up and continue to find our purpose in life.
 The best part of attending LFHS is the beautiful friendships made and the great teachers that made a

difference in my life. I created lasting friendships that I still hold dear to my heart. Even though this was a time of finding myself, I made some great memories I will never forget. I am proud to say I will forever bleed maroon and gold! Once a Falcon, always a Falcon.” – Yuri Gracia, Class of 2004
 “My biggest lesson and what I want other average peeps to know is that not everyone peeks in high school. I had hard school years and was not the best student. Twenty years later, I have 3 degrees, studied & traveled abroad to 4 countries, and won awards for being the best business student in school— all of this DEBT free. I don’t owe anyone money for what I obtained. That is something I am proud of. I have a career, and in near future I WILL be working on my Doctorate. In the meantime, I help other students write, review, apply, and prepare for scholarships. Why? Because not everyone peeks in Highschool and that is ok. I remind them that the moon shines when it is its time to shine.”
 - Jessica Ramos-Karmaker, Class of 2004
 “Best part of attending LFHS: small community/teacher and students who cared. Many of you all

know I lost my mom my junior year and everyone was so caring and supportive— principal, teachers, and students alike. They collected money for my family, attended the services, gave me a break from classes and lend me a crying shoulder. Biggest lesson: You can’t ever go back. Enjoy every moment good or bad. It happens for a reason.” - Julietta Ricardo Flores, Class of 2004
 “Biggest lesson: You can’t stop the waves, but you can learn how to surf! Enjoy all the waves... the high waves will remind you of all the blessings... the lows will remind you of the fragility of life, while simultaneously enticing new hope for the highs again!
 Best part of LFHS: a small town/school by the border by the sea... a small treasure away from the big ruckus of city life prepared me academically in so many ways... a district that favors and supports nerd culture in a very weird fun way; all while still inciting in me the love to slow down, look forward to the local activities, and spend time with family!” - Brenda Saucedo-Mendoza, Class of 2004



Scholarly Squirrels: Exploring the Dynamics of Texas A&M's Campus Wildlife

Ongoing project will provide undergraduate wildlife students with hands-on field experiences



Texas A&M students in Rangeland, Wildlife and Fisheries Management are using GPS and radio frequency collars to track the movements of squirrels. The information gathered will help determine home ranges and habitat preferences. (Sam Craft/Texas A&M AgriLife)

Beginning this month, students in the Texas A&M College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Department of Rangeland, Wildlife and Fisheries Management, RWFM, will use various field techniques and statistical analyses to provide quantitative insight into the world of these bushy-tailed, campus rodents.

Campus wildlife provides unique learning opportunities

Of the eight squirrel species that call Texas home, the highly adaptable Eastern fox squirrel has seemingly found its niche in the open, park-like environments of universities across much of the state. With a variety of habitat options, an abundant food supply, and relatively few predators, it's no surprise that these campus squirrels flourish.

Ty Werdel, Ph.D., RWFM assistant professor, said this provides the perfect opportunity to integrate accessible, field-based monitoring with academic coursework.

"The presence of urban wildlife on campus enables our students to conduct research and practice key technical skills in their own backyard," Werdel said.

Project launches this spring

Led by Werdel and RWFM graduate students, undergraduates enrolled in Techniques in Wildlife Management will set traps located in trees to capture 12 squirrels across campus. Once the animals are captured, students will

collect data such as sex and weight and equip the squirrels with micro-GPS collars.

Werdel said these GPS collars, like very small pet collars, have no detrimental effect on the daily activities of the wildlife wearing them and will provide researchers with fine-scale spatial insight into their movement and behavior.

To mitigate stress on the animal and ensure human safety, only trained personnel will be allowed to handle the squirrels; however, wildlife students will assist in the process. Further, the trapping will take place only in the early morning or late evening hours to avoid the hottest portions of the day.

"It's important for us to ensure this process results in the least amount of stress possible for the squirrels," Werdel said. "Prior to even starting this work, we obtained a research permit from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and approval from the Texas A&M Division of Research Animal Use Protocol."

Information collected sheds light on the campus squirrels

In addition to monitoring general movement patterns, the GPS collars, other survey methods and statistical modeling will enable students to enroll in two additional undergraduate courses — Wildlife Population Dynamics and Urban Wildlife and Fisheries — to determine the campus squirrel population, as well as home ranges and habitat preferences across the

landscape.

For example, thanks to an existing geographic information system, GIS, database of campus trees, along with data on building density and roads, students can correlate squirrel activity and density with particular landscape features. This helps researchers better understand which campus elements squirrels most prefer or avoid.

Further, students will monitor and assess squirrel mortality, locate and monitor nesting dens, and estimate squirrel populations on campus based on surveys.

"This project will enable students to learn and implement an array of basic wildlife techniques including radio telemetry, census methodology, trapping, GIS and statistical analyses," Werdel said. "Beyond gaining an understanding of the population dynamics of urban squirrels, this project is really about equipping our students with the skills needed to successfully enter the career field of wildlife management."

Building on existing campus data

This isn't the first time Texas A&M students have investigated the behavior of campus squirrels. Twenty-five years ago, Roel Lopez, Ph.D., head of the Department of Rangeland, Wildlife and Fisheries Management and director of the Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute, launched a similar project.

"At the time, urban squirrels had never been

studied in Texas and had rarely been studied in the U.S.," said Lopez, then an assistant professor.

This project spanned six years and led to numerous findings, including that male squirrels on the Texas A&M campus are more likely to die from highway-related deaths than females.

Department faculty were able to revive this project thanks in part to financial support from an alumnus of Texas A&M's wildlife program.

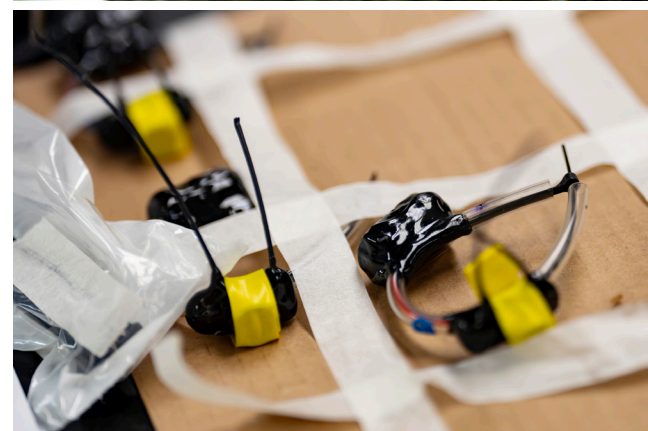
"College Station and the Texas A&M campus have urbanized and changed drastically since the initial study," Lopez said. "This will provide an amazing opportunity to see if these changes have affected how these animals use the landscape."

Werdel said understanding the impact of urbanization on all wildlife species is extremely relevant as cities continue their outward expansion and overlap with

wildlife habitat.

"The project's primary objective is to prepare our students with the technical knowledge and skills needed to conserve and manage any number of wildlife species in an evolving environment,"

Werdel said. "While this research is specific to our campus, students will be able to apply what they learn through this project to future wildlife management endeavors."



Students learned technical knowledge and skills during their participation in the study. These abilities will apply to future work in wildlife management and conservation. (Sam Craft/Texas A&M AgriLife)



Students released Eastern Fox squirrels into the wild after capturing and fitting the squirrels with a small radio frequency collar as part of a research project on campus. (Sam Craft/Texas A&M AgriLife)

