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Your Community Newspaper, Serving Southern Cameron County

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By Mike Villarreal

D.W.I. (Driving With Intelligence) has been around since 2023 with a mission in mind. Jonathan S. Sanchez is the C.E.O./ Owner of Driving With Intelligence and was born in Aurora, Colorado, but was raised in the Rio Grande Valley.

In 2013, with no vehicle and limited resources, he conceptualized D.W.I., sketched out his ideas, and committed to making them a reality. He took the bus every day, conducted research, built a website using Wix, and filed the necessary paperwork to establish his business identity with the state of Texas.

However, life had other plans, and he had to pause his entrepreneurial dreams. In 2020, a wake-up call shifted his perspective on life, and he met his better half, Jessica, who inspired him to reignite his passion.

In 2023, they decided to implement D.W.I. together; they are committed to saving lives, one ride

at a time, transforming "Driving While Intoxicated" into "Driving With Intelligence."

Jonathan enjoys playing pool when not working, having BBQs with loved ones, and spending time with his daughter Olivia. Jessica Camacho is the Manager/Receptionist of Driving With Intelligence. She was born and raised in San Benito, where she currently resides. For most of her adult life, she was a stay-at-home mother to three children and raised in San Benito, where she currently resides. She was a stay-at-home mother to three children for most of her adult life.

In 2020, she met Jonathan, who completely transformed her life. She now works full-time, manages D.W.I., and even went back to school. She is incredibly proud of all her accomplishments and finds being a part of D.W.I. deeply rewarding.

She manages Jonathan's schedule, handles promotion, runs the social media, creates TikTok

videos, and even helps with driving when needed. Outside of work, she cherishes spending time with her family.

Her mom and dad are her best friends, and she loves riding her motorcycle with Jonathan, playing softball,

watching scary movies, and being actively involved in her children's lives as a proud "Mama Bear."

Together, she and Jonathan are dedicated to making their community safer by providing reliable, sober transportation.

Driving With Intelligence is a sober transportation service designed to help those who need a safe ride get to their destination on time while avoiding costly DWI(Driving While Intoxicated) charges.

They also provide OVS(Open Vehicle Service) and basic vehicle diagnosis, such as replacing radiator hoses or flat tires. They also deliver food in their

available locations and can either pick it up or pay for it, take the receipt, and be paid upon delivery.

If you simply want to enjoy a date night and don't want to drive, they are more than happy to provide the ride.

I was able to speak with Jessica, who said they will also drive your car home if you have been drinking and don't want to leave your vehicle.

For their Open Vehicle Service(OVS), they can usually get you on your way within 30 minutes at

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CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

a much lower cost than a locksmith.

To make rides more comfortable, they have both male and female drivers available and are currently hiring sober drivers as they look to expand the DWI family.

I recently had the pleasure of meeting both Jonathan and Jessica at Explore Harlingen's one-year anniversary dinner celebration (Online Blog to Magazine courtesy of Lisa Campos) and was truly amazed at their commitment to helping

their community by providing safe and sober rides.

They also will fix minor inconveniences such as locked keys, changing tires or radiator hoses, or dropping off food.

Driving With Intelligence is available Monday through Saturday from 8 a.m. to 2 a.m. and will work outside these hours depending on availability and advance notice.

Their service prices are \$10-15 one way or \$20-25 round trip. They will go outside their usual radius but use an Uber estimate and charge a lower rate. They also have three packages available:

Package 1 has 3 roundtrip rides or 6 one-way rides, Package 2 has 5 roundtrip rides or 10 one-way rides, and Package 3 has 7 roundtrip rides or 14 one-way rides.

If you need any of D.W.I.'s many services, they currently serve the San Benito, Harlingen area, the many services provided by D.W.I. They currently serve the San Benito, Harlingen area, a 10-mile radius around Rio Hondo, Combes, Los Fresnos, and Progresso(not into Mexico) with a 30-minute advance notice.

To set up a pick-up, you can reach them online at sobertransports@savinglives-dwi.com or

at 956-564-4072(Male Driver) or 956-247-2401(Female Driver). They are

currently accepting debit/ credit cards, PayPal, Cash App, and Apple Pay.

Photos courtesy of Driving With Intelligence



31st Annual Shrimp Cook-Off is Right Around the Corner

By Mike Villarreal

Are you ready to taste some delicious seafood? Get ready for Port Isabel's 31st Annual Shrimp Cook-off and Seafood Festival hosted by the Port Isabel Chamber of Commerce. The event will take place on Saturday, November 2, 2024, at Sutherlands-1704 Queen Isabella Blvd. from 10 am to 4 pm. It will be a day of food vendors, market vendors, raffles, and more!

buds for an amazing experience as talented local chefs showcase their culinary skills. Sample an array of delectable shrimp dishes and vote for your favorite! Explore the vibrant vendors offering local crafts, art, and souvenirs. Enjoy the company of friends and family as you immerse yourself in the coastal charm of Port Isabel.

Whether you're a seafood enthusiast or looking for a memorable day out, this festival promises a delightful

experience. There will be awards for both professional amateur and high school divisions. People's choice awards will also be presented.

If you need more information about the event, please contact the Port Isabel Chamber of Commerce at (956) 943-2262 or email them at admin@portisabel.org.

Information and photos are from the Port Isabel Chamber of Commerce Facebook page.



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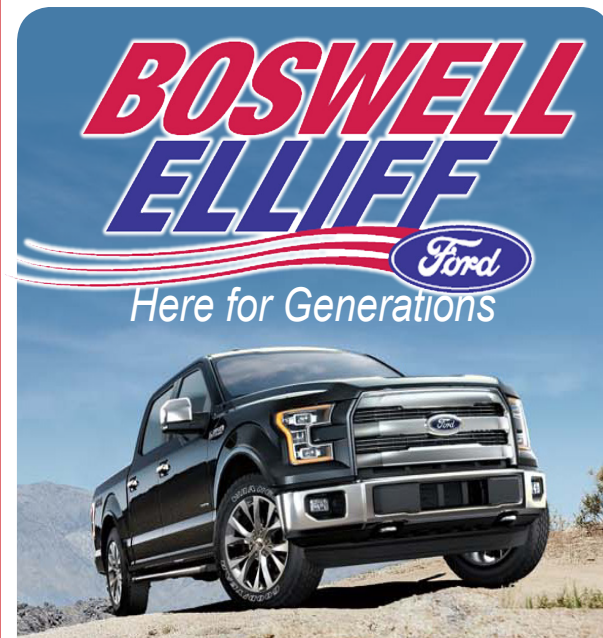
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Contribuido por: Alvino Villarreal

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All quotes shall be received no later than 2:00 p.m. on October 28, 2024 at the main office located at 500 N. Arroyo Blvd. Los Fresnos, TX 78566. For additional information, please contact Lissett Enriquez, Executive Director at 956-233-5012.

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Doris Lottie Ehmke Herring

Doris Lottie Ehmke Herring was born on August 17, 1956, in San Deigo, California, and passed away on Wednesday, October 9, 2024. On July 11, 1977, she married Donald Wayne 'Don' Herring (1951-2013) in Brookshire, Texas. Together, they raised two children, traveling and making roots and memories in Guam, Maine, Texas, Mississippi, the Azores, to name a few. Doris was a dedicated wife, mother, friend, and educator. The many coffee cups given to her during her teaching career demonstrated the fondness her students had for her. Since retiring, Doris enjoyed her time as a volunteer at the local food pantry, tutoring, watching her favorite football team (Cowboys), and traveling to other countries. Doris's favorite pastime was spending a day at the beach. She dearly loved her family and friends and considered each day a blessing.

Doris is survived by her son, Jason Herring; daughter, Dawn Herring; mother, Doris B. Layman; brothers, Paul Ehmke (Rose Marie Ehmke), John Ehmke and Eddie Westbrook (Stephanie Westbrook); sister, Mary Morris, Lillian Lil Dowdy (John Dowdy), Martha Nelson (David Nelson), and Irene Small; 15 nieces/nephews, 15 great nieces/nephews and many family members and friends that lovingly referred to her as Aunt Doris.

Doris was a warrior in every sense, facing life's challenges with grace and strength. May we all find peace knowing how amazing a person she was and how blessed we all were to have known her. She had one of the kindest and sweetest souls. She will forever be in our hearts.

Those wishing to make memorial gifts may do so to the Food Bank of the Rio Grande Valley, Inc. Donate Now | Food Bank RGV (<https://foodbankrgv.com/>)

Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to Treviño's Funeral Home and Cremations, 1355 Old Port Isabel Road, Brownsville, Texas 78521 and 956-542-2583

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LOS FRESNOS SPORTS

LFHS Cross Country Back in Action

Lady Falcons return from Open

Los Fresnos News
 On the 11th the boys Falcons received 2nd Place and the Lady Falcons received 3rd place both as Teams and are also both qualified to compete at Regional. Thomas Tamayo, in particular received 2nd place as individual. Los Fresnos CISD Athletics posted on X's congratulating both the boys and girls that won 2nd and 3rd as teams. Concerning Tomayo, they said, "Great run and primed to make a run for a top finish at regionals."



Thomas Tamayo for his 2nd place individual finish at district.

By Ruben Rodriguez
Los Fresnos News

The Los Fresnos Lady Falcons continue on in 32-6A, and all has gone great so far. In a shortened district with now five teams, the wins become more important in determining who stays and who goes home in the playoffs.

After their first bye week, the Lady Falcons returned to action against the Hanna Golden Eagles. After sweeping the Lady Golden Eagles last season, Los Fresnos looked to repeat History.

Los Fresnos took control early on in the game and

that set the tempo for the rest of the day. Key plays on offense and defense allowed the Lady Falcons to defeat Hanna in three sets 3-0.

With the win, the Lady Falcons wrapped up the first half of District Play.

As we recap the first half of district play, we take a look at how it played out for the Lady Falcons. Los Fresnos opened up 32-6A action with back to back sweeps against San Benito and Brownsville Veterans. The Lady Falcons then suffered their first loss to Harlingen High in a key battle that came down to the last set.

To begin the second half

of district, Los Fresnos will take on San Benito, then Brownsville Veterans on October 22. The Lady Falcons will then face off against Harlingen October 26. To wrap up the regular season, Los Fresnos will clash against Brownsville Hanna.

Los Fresnos sits with a 3-1 record in 32-6A. Other records include Harlingen at 4-1, Brownsville Veterans at 3-2, and both San Benito and Brownsville Hanna at 1-4 on the season.

The Lady Falcons look to continue on and reach the 6A playoffs once more.



Ready for District

Falcons will begin 32-6A Play

By Ruben Rodriguez
Los Fresnos News

The Los Fresnos Falcons football team has officially ended their non-district campaign. The Falcons have gotten past their BYE Week. Now the challenge begins as Los Fresnos begins 32-6A play this week.

The 2024 UIL Realignment took place this past February and changes were made to many Districts, Especially 32-6A. Originally a six team district, The Rivera Raiders departed down to 5A DI, while the Weslaco Panthers were moved to 31-6A. Brownsville Veterans ascended from 5A to 6A. When it was all said and done, 32-6A became

a five-team district. In a smaller district, every game becomes a "must win" and the Falcons know that very well.

But before we get to District Play, we look at what we so for the Falcons in the first half of the season. The non-district campaign turned out to be a very successful one, and here is why.

Los Fresnos went 3-0 to begin 2024, racking up big wins over McAllen (43-10), McAllen Rowe (49-14), and Laredo United South in a thriller (34-33).

The Falcons then fell short to PSJA in their first and to date, only loss in the season. The Falcons quickly responded with wins over Edinburg (38-14), and Sharyland (70-33).

Now, Los Fresnos will begin district play Friday October 18 against the San Benito Greyhounds. Then the Falcons will take on newcomer Brownsville Veterans on October 24. The Falcons will host Harlingen to begin November on the 1st. To wrap up the regular season, the Falcons will travel to Sams Stadium to take on the Hanna Golden Eagles.

Last season, Los Fresnos finished in fourth place in District with a 2-3 record. Despite a losing record, the Falcons finished in fourth, reaching the playoffs. This year, it is a win-out mentality as one team will not reach the playoffs, so once again, it is a "must win" every Friday night coming up.



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UTRGV Recognized By ED As Among Schools 'Doing The Most To Lift Students Up'

By News and Media Relations

RIO GRANDE VALLEY, TEXAS – OCT. 16, 2024 – UTRGV has been named one of 200 institutions nationwide – and 14 in Texas – eligible for the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) Postsecondary Success Recognition Program. Part of U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona's Raise the Bar initiative, the program recognizes colleges and universities that demonstrate exceptional performance in advancing equitable access, student success and post-graduation outcomes in their state.

In a press release announcing the initiative, Cardona said it is intended to "recognize schools

doing the most to lift students up."

ED identified the 200 eligible institutions based on how effectively they:

- Enroll low-income students and students of color in their state.
- Help those students graduate or transfer successfully.
- Prepare them to enter the career of their choice and enjoy upward mobility, including recouping costs and earning a premium over high school graduates in their state.

UTRGV is one of 10 Texas institutions listed among 100 predominantly bachelor's degree granting institutions eligible for the ED's designation. Of these, 75% are Minority-Serving Institutions or qualify for the Strengthening Institutions

Program, which focuses on institutions serving large proportions of low-income students. Additionally, 100 predominantly associate's or certificate granting institutions – four in Texas – were also recognized for eligibility.

UTRGV President Guy Bailey said it is an honor to be recognized among the leading institutions driving student success across the country.

"This selection by the U.S. Department of Education reflects our ongoing efforts to make a high-quality education accessible to all students, and to support their journey toward a brighter future through meaningful careers," Bailey said.

RECENT UTRGV RANKINGS

- UTRGV is ranked first in Texas overall and first in Washington Monthly's 2024 Best Bang for the Buck rankings for the southern region of the country.
- UTRGV ranks first

among all Texas institutions and fifth among national public universities in Lowest Net Price of Attendance.

- UTRGV also ranks first among Texas universities for Top

Performance of Pell Grant Students and in Social Mobility for Students.

For more information about UTRGV's rankings and achievements, visit utrgv.edu/rankings.



UTRGV has been recognized as one of 200 institutions nationwide eligible for the Postsecondary Success Recognition Program, part of U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona's Raise the Bar initiative, which honors colleges and universities for their outstanding efforts in promoting equitable access, student success, and post-graduation outcomes. (UTRGV Photo by David Pike)

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LAST WEEK'S SUDOKU ANSWERS

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LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORDS ANSWERS

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THEME: HALLOWEEN

ACROSS

1. Cut of lamb
6. Numbers, abbr.
9. Friend from Down Under
13. Jonas Salk's conquest
14. Bingo!
15. Secret storage
16. Like a beaver?
17. Sun, in Spain
18. Knightly suit
19. *Can take the form of a certain flying mammal
21. *Spell casting
23. Between E and NE
24. Fisherman's fly
25. Away's partner
28. Biology lab supply
30. Offspring of alumnus
35. Month before Nisan
37. Latte choice
39. Filthy dough
40. Sound on a scale
41. *Homeowner's Halloween option
43. Subsequently
44. A deadly sin?
46. Competitive advantage
47. Assigned theater spot
48. Popular post
50. Biblical firstborn
52. What skeletons

DOWN

1. Hightailed it
2. *Adjective for Merlin, hairwise
3. Aquarium scum
4. *"Unattractive" Munster relative
5. SI vakian monetary unit
6. Project Apollo org.
7. Exclamation of surprise
8. Pico de gallo, e.g.
9. Painter Chagall
10. Pinnacle
11. Chris Hemsworth's Marvel role
12. *Like decorated house on Halloween
15. El Chapo's organization, e.g.
20. MC Hammer's "Too _____ to Quit" album
22. Black gold
24. Puppy purveyor, often
25. *Teeth of #19

Across

26. Love intensely
27. a.k.a. honey badger
29. 0.405 hectare
31. *Blood and _____
32. Partner of pains
33. *Spooky house sound
34. "Fiddler on the Roof" gossipy character
36. Coral barrier
38. Gads, anagrammed
42. Mold a mind
45. Expel a lawyer
49. Ever, to a poet
51. Bluish planet
54. *#12 Down, alt. sp.
56. Sushi option
57. Stubborn beast
58. Swear, not curse
59. Type of hexahedron
60. Having wings
61. Black-eyed legumes
62. Sound of a bell
63. Fail to mention
64. Magnolia State, abbr.
67. *R.I.P. container

- and skeddaddlers have in common
53. Tiresias in "Oedipus Rex", e.g.
55. French vineyard
57. *Grisly
61. *Ghostly apparition
65. Throat dangler
66. *"The Murders in the ___ Morgue"
68. Actress Watts
69. Relating to a lobe
70. Songwriter Gershwin
71. a.k.a. tangelos
72. Pitcher
73. Lt.'s inferior, in the Navy
74. River clay deposits

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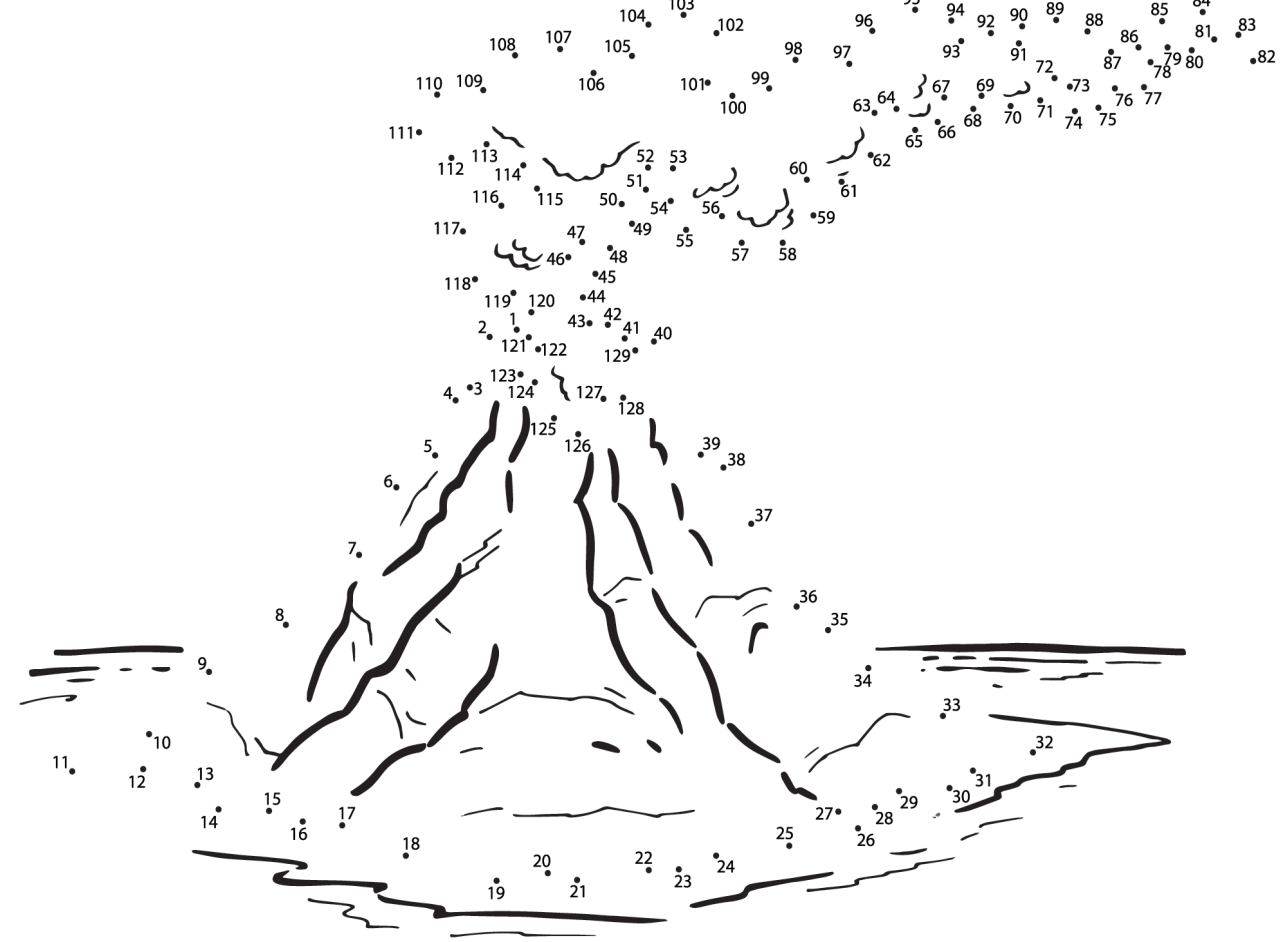
Two of a Kind

Which two pictures are exactly the same?



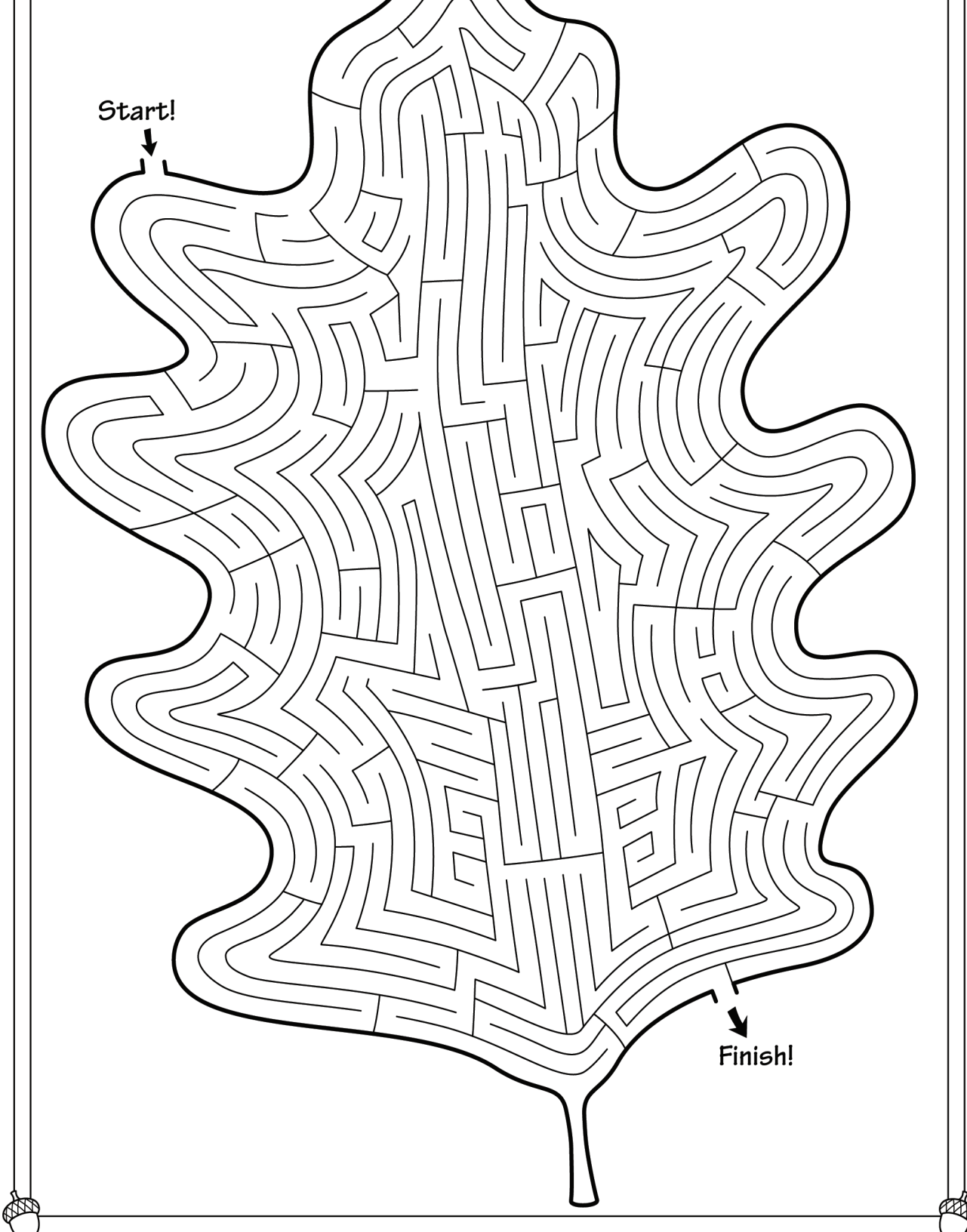
Connect the Dots

Connect the dots to complete the picture!



Maze

Travel the maze from start to finish!



City Meeting -October 8th

Discussion of Garbage Dumpster Rates, Agreements Between State & City on Highway Regulations, and More

Iris Garcia
Special to LFN

On Tuesday, October 8th, the city of Los Fresnos held its monthly regular city council meeting. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Flores, and Mr. Milum, city manager, led the meeting in an invocation. The mayor and three of the commissioners were present.

No visitor remarks were made during this meeting.

The council considered (8) consent agenda items— which are matters considered to be routine by the City Council and will be enacted by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless requested by a member of the City Council. The item may subsequently be removed from the Consent Agenda to be considered separately.

All Consent Agenda items were motioned for approval and seconded. Motion carried unanimously, and are listed below:

1. Consideration and ACTION to approve the minutes from September 3 & 10 2024.

2. Consideration and ACTION to approve Resolution 14-2024 adopting the Investment Policy and Strategies for fiscal year 2024/2025.

3. Consideration and ACTION to approve a Proclamation declaring November 6-10, 2023 as

Municipal Court Week.

4. Consideration and ACTION to approve the final plat for Valle Alto East Subdivision Phase 6.

5. Consideration and ACTION to approve the second reading of Ordinance 562 amending the code of ordinance of the City of Los Fresnos, said code is hereby amended by changing the speed limits; providing for a penalty not to exceed \$500.00 for any violation thereof; providing for an effective date; providing for publication; providing for severability and ordaining other provisions related to the subject matter thereof.

6. Consideration and ACTION to excuse the absence of Javier Rodriguez Jr. from the September 16 2024 Planning and Zoning meeting.

7. Consideration and ACTION to excuse the absence of Henry Bebon Jr. from the September 16, 2024 Planning and Zoning meeting.

8. Consideration and ACTION to excuse the absence of Terry Vinson from the September 3, 2024, City Council meeting.

Following the consent agenda, the city council covered the (12) Action Items.

1. Consideration and ACTION to approve or reject any or all proposals received for group health insurance.

Commissioner Gonzalez made a motion to approve group health insurance from United Health Care, Option 2, with Greer & Associates, and seconded by Commissioner Muñoz. Motion carried, 4-0.

2. Consideration and ACTION to approve or reject any or all proposals received for group life insurance.

Commissioner Gonzalez made a motion to approve group life insurance from Mutual for the renewal amount which is the same as it is currently, with Greer & Associates as the representative, and it was seconded by Commissioner Vinson. Motion carried, 4-0.

3. Consideration and ACTION to approve or reject any or all proposals received for supplemental insurance.

The City Manager, recommended approval of dental insurance from United Health Care, Option 3, with Greer & Associates as the representative, and vision insurance from Mutual of Omaha, Option 1, Renewal, with Greer & Associates as the representative.

Commissioner Gonzalez made a motion to approve, and it was seconded by Commissioner Muñoz. Motion carried, 4-0.

4. Consideration and ACTION to increase dumpster garbage rates and update the fee schedule with approved fees.

The total cost for garbage carts for both residential and commercial are now above the \$20 the city charges its residents and commercial cart accounts. The city manager proposed to increase the cart amount to \$25.00 per month, which is an increase of \$5. He notes, "we have not raised the rate since 2012. This will allow the rate of \$25 to stay the same for several years before having to increase it again. The \$25 amount not only includes the cart, it includes the brush and bulky item pick up that is done each month."

Commissioner Muñoz made a motion to approve, and it was seconded by Commissioner Vinson. Motion carried, 4-0.

5. Consideration and ACTION to approve Resolution 13-2024

approving the agreement between the State of Texas and the City of Los Fresnos for the maintenance, control, supervision, and regulation of certain state highways and/or portions of the state highways in the City of Los Fresnos and providing for the execution of the said agreement.

According to the City Manager, "This is to update the agreement with the city and TxDOT on items [the city] are responsible to handle and items they are responsible to handle. Nothing changes as far as responsibilities. It also updates the city limits since

the last agreements."

Commissioner Muñoz made a motion to approve, and it was seconded by Commissioner Gonzalez. Motion carried, 4-0.

6. Consideration and ACTION to approve the bids received for the following: Pest Control
Commissioner Gonzalez made a motion to approve, and it was seconded by Commissioner Vinson. Motion carried, 3-1.

7. Consideration and ACTION to approve the bids received for the following: Vehicle Washing

Commissioner Gonzalez made a motion to approve, and it was seconded by Commissioner Muñoz. Motion carried, 4-0.

8. Consideration and ACTION to re-appoint or appoint of members to the Los Fresnos Housing Authority.

No action was taken.

9. Consideration and ACTION to approve Resolution 15-2024 for the City Council for the City of Los Fresnos expressing its nomination for Appraisal District Directors for the Cameron Appraisal District Board of Directors.

No action was taken.

10. Discuss and approve award to selected grant management firm for grant pre-application, application, and implementation services for Los Fresnos' 2025-2026 Texas Community Development Grant Fund Program administered

by Texas Department of Agriculture.

Commissioner Gonzalez made a motion to approve, and it was seconded by Commissioner Muñoz. Motion carried, 4-0.

11. Discuss and approve award to selected engineering/architectural/surveying service provider(s) for grant pre-application, application, and implementation services for Los Fresnos' 2025-2026 Texas Community Development Grant Fund Program administered by Texas Department of Agriculture.

Commissioner Gonzalez made a motion to approve, and it was seconded by Commissioner Muñoz. Motion carried, 4-0.

12. Consideration and ACTION to close at 12:00 pm on December 31, 2024 for an employee End of the Year Celebration.

Commissioner Muñoz made a motion to approve, and it was seconded by Commissioner Vinson. Motion carried, 4-0.

Following this, Commissioner Muñoz made a motion to approve the city manager's report, and seconded by Mayor Flores. Motion carried, 4-0. Then Commissioner Vinson made a motion to acknowledge department heads' reports, and seconded by Commissioner Muñoz. Motion carried, 4-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 PM.

Sand Castle Days Continued Despite Unexpected Weather



1st place By Mike Villarreal

On October 3rd through the 6th, the 36th Annual Sandcastle Days took place at Clayton's Beach Bar & Grill on South Padre Island.

Over thirty-four years ago, South Padre residents and master sand sculptors Walter McDonald, known as "Amazing Walter," and Lucinda Wierenga, known as "Sandy Feet," started Sandcastle Days to showcase the exceptional sculpting qualities of South Padre Island sand and to underscore the importance of protecting our beautiful coastal shores. This free event has grown from a local celebration to a qualifying event for the World Championships of Sand Sculpting, attracting over 30,000 fans who witness

the sand's magic come alive. This year, there was an Amateur Division Competition and Sand Camp as well.

Despite the unexpected rain and high tides, this year's Sand Castle Days event was a testament to the unwavering dedication of the sculptors. The weather didn't deter them from completing their masterpieces. Rain and wind couldn't dampen their spirits, and the fans were equally undeterred, enjoying a day at the beach filled with the magic of sand sculpting.

The event saw participation from talented sculptors from all corners of the globe. Jihoon Choi from South Korea claimed the third-place spot with his sculpture 'Refreshment.' Dmitrii Klimenko from Russia

secured second place with 'Elon/Alien.' The first place and people's choice award went to Karlis Ile from Latvia with his sculpture 'Dreamer.'

Karlis Ile from Latvia returned to SPI for another round after taking 2nd place in last year's contest with "Grandma." Ile mentioned that the sculpture "Dreamer" was inspired by Hemingway's Old Man and the Sea. "I often fly in my dreams, but almost never swim. Someday, I would also like to dream of swimming like a fish and exploring the depths of the ocean and the colorful coral reefs. Hopefully, there won't be any sharks." -



2nd place

Karlis Ile.

Karlis Ile, an accomplished sculptor hailing from Latvia, has been passionately crafting art since 1995. His artistic repertoire spans a wide array of materials, including bronze, steel, granite, and wood, with recent forays into the captivating realms of ice, snow, and sand. Karlis is drawn to the primal energy inherent in these natural elements and the ephemeral magic they exude in the moment.

A graduate of the esteemed Art Academy of Latvia, Karlis holds a master's degree in art in humanities and has honed his craft through a rigorous figural Sculpture Master workshop.

Karlis's artistic expertise has not gone unnoticed

on the international stage. His talent has earned him numerous gold medals from prestigious festivals held in countries such as Russia, Switzerland, Finland, China, Japan, Lithuania, the USA, Canada, Germany, and

his beloved homeland of Latvia. His success is a source of pride for the sand sculpting community.

Photos from South Padre Island Sandcastle Days Facebook Page. Last photo is from Karlis Ile Facebook Page



Karlis Ile 1st Place and People Choice award



3rd place

From Spooky Lore To Science Fact: Unmasking The 'Chupacabra'

Texas A&M AgriLife expert provides scientific explanation for the paranormal creature

By Sarah Fuller

With its grey, scaly skin, protruding dorsal spines, menacing fangs and proclivity for small livestock, the mythical chupacabra has stoked both curiosity and fear across portions of the Americas for decades.

Despite its diverse origin stories, a wildlife expert with Texas A&M AgriLife Research said there is a simple explanation to chupacabra sightings — one far more entrenched in science than the supernatural.

If you consider the most common descriptions of the chupacabra, from its physical appearance to its behavior, you're likely dealing with a coyote that is in the late stages of mange, said John Tomeček, Ph.D., associate professor in the Texas A&M College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Department of Rangeland, Wildlife and Fisheries Management.

"Mange is a debilitating disease that can infect a wide range of fur-bearing mammals," Tomeček said. "Depending on the animal's ability to overcome the symptoms of mange, the condition can become chronic, leading to behavioral changes and

even death."

Mange symptoms explain chupacabra's appearance

In canines, mange is caused by two species of microscopic mites that burrow into the skin causing intense irritation, itching, lesions, fur loss, and scabbing and thickening of the skin.

Tomeček said mange also tends to follow a pattern of progression along the animal's body.

"On canids, the last place they lose fur is right between the shoulder blades in an area that we call the ruff," he said. "This fits descriptions of chupacabras having spikes or a ridge along their backs."

Further amplifying the ridge-like characteristics reported in chupacabra sightings are the emaciated conditions of mange-infested animals.

"Infected animals can become extremely gaunt, and it's incredibly painful in the later stages," Tomeček said. "At that point, the animal appears like an otherworldly beast — especially if you see it in the dusky hours of the morning or evening."

Coyotes aren't the only common wildlife species

that can succumb to infection. Tomeček said he once observed the body of a smaller, cryptic animal that had died of mange.

"I honestly wasn't sure what I was looking at," he said. "I had to investigate its teeth and paws before determining it was a raccoon."

Changes in infected wildlife behavior

Aside from mange embodying the physical characteristics of the legendary chupacabra, the disease alters the typical behavioral patterns of the animal who is now weak and seeking easy access to resources.

"When you have a coyote that is in late-stage mange, they are bolder as far as approaching residential areas to find food because they are desperate," Tomeček said. "They're taking risks that an otherwise healthy animal wouldn't take."

According to the American Museum of Natural History, the legend of the chupacabra originated in Puerto Rico following reports of livestock deaths in which the animals had seemingly been drained of blood.

Translated from Spanish, the name chupacabra



According to a Texas A&M AgriLife wildlife expert, reports of the mythical chupacabra are likely people seeing a coyote with late-stage mange. (Adobe stock)

means "goat sucker."

In most cases, the small livestock killed during suspected chupacabra attacks are confined to cages or corrals, which Tomeček said is consistent with predation from a sick animal.

"Any predatory animal that is debilitated must seek out easier prey because wild prey are typically agile and wary," he said.

The vampire-like punctures often reported on victims of the chupacabra also correspond with the coyote's standard predation method of strangulation through multiple bites to their prey's neck.

"Coyote's mouths are not good at getting and maintaining a grip, so they have to re-bite," Tomeček said. "In doing so, they may end up exsanguinating the animal because of puncture wounds to the jugular vein."

He said reports of chupacabras fully draining an animal of blood may also be explained by how rapidly blood will settle and coagulate within the dead animal, making it appear as though it has been drained.

Wildlife boldness doesn't equate to aggression

Although sick wildlife may become bolder in

their search for food sources around human development, Tomeček emphasized this does not necessarily translate to aggression.

"I always make the distinction between an animal being bold and an animal being aggressive," Tomeček said. "Being bold just means an animal is taking risks and doing things that they normally wouldn't because they're desperate."

He said this is especially true in urban environments where homes and businesses produce an abundance of food waste that provides an easy source of sustenance.

"Wildlife like coyotes, bobcats and raccoons are very well adapted to people, so urbanization is actually increasing the abundance of these animals," Tomeček said. "They are far denser in urban areas than in rural areas; and, as a result, you have an increased opportunity for wildlife encounters."

What to do when encountering an animal with mange

Because mange is transmissible to humans and domestic animals, Tomeček advises that you do not approach the wildlife and secure your pets. Individuals should

also contact their county wildlife biologist with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Although individuals may have an initial reaction to humanely dispatch the sick animal, it is important to properly identify the animal as it could be someone's domestic pet with a case of mange.

"There are no known preventative measures for mange, but if you live in a region where the disease is common, it would be wise to consider a regular bathing regime for your working and companion animals that includes some sort of acaricide treatment," Tomeček said. "Of course, seek appropriate veterinary care when needed."

Although it can be easy for the folklore and mystery of the chupacabra to overshadow the reality behind these strange sightings, Tomeček encourages Texans to not lose sight of the actual situation.

"When dealing with a 'chupacabra,' we are dealing with a real animal — typically a coyote — that's experiencing a serious health problem," he said. "Treat the situation accordingly so we can help steward our wildlife resources."



Mange causes intense itching, lesions, weight loss, fur loss and other symptoms in animals. The progression of these symptoms mirrors descriptions of the appearance of the 'chupacabra.' (Texas Parks and Wildlife Department)

Halloween is a Tradition That Dates Back Many Years

By Mike Villarreal

As we approach the season of ghosts, ghouls, and candy corn, the excitement is palpable. Kids eagerly plan their costumes, ready to hit the streets for some sweet treats. It's not just the kids; many adults are equally thrilled, counting down the days to October to dress up or transform their yards into spooky wonderlands. Halloween gives many of us an excuse to be kids again and show our neighbors a different side. Many festivals and parties

offer safe and fun places to celebrate this month. Some schools even have costume contests, and there are haunted houses you can visit, such as the Monte De Los Muertos, hosted by Donnas Corn Maze in Donna.

For those seeking a more intense thrill, haunted houses are a popular choice. The Monte De Los Muertos, hosted by Donnas Corn Maze in Donna, is a prime example. A walk through their wicked woods promises an experience that will send shivers down your spine.

"Enter if you dare, and leave if you can," they say.

When I think back to my childhood, Halloween always stands out as a time of pure excitement. I didn't always get to pick my costume, but that was part of the fun. Whether I was Dracula or the Devil, the thrill of the night was always the same - the endless supply of candies. I also remember my mom loving having a big bowl of candies to give out and seeing all the kids dressed up.

October is also a great month to watch scary movies such as The Exorcist, Poltergeist, Nightmare on Elm Street, Friday the 13th,

Ghostbusters, A Nightmare Before Christmas, and Halloween.

Halloween falls on October 31 every year; this year, it will be on a Thursday. Its history can be traced back to the ancient Celtic Festival of Samhain, in which people would wear costumes and light bonfires to scare off ghosts.

Pope Gregory 3 designated All Saints Day to honor all saints on November 1. Eventually, some of the traditions of Samhain were incorporated for All Saints Day, with the day before known as All Hallows Eve and later becoming known as Halloween.

Two thousand years ago, the Celts lived in what is now Ireland, Northern France, and the United Kingdom and celebrated the new year on November 1. For the Celts, this day marked the end of harvest and summer and the start of winter. The Celts believed that on the night before the new year, the veil between the worlds of the dead and the living became blurred. They celebrated Samhain on October 31 because they believed the ghosts of the deceased would return to the earth.

To mark this event, druids built sacred bonfires to burn crops and animals as sacrifices. The Celts

also wore costumes made of animal skins and heads. Once the festivities were over, they would re-light their hearth fires, which had been put out earlier to help protect them throughout winter. By A.D. 1000, the church made November 2 All Saints Day to honor the dead. On All Saints Day, the celebration was similar to Samhain, which also involved people dressing in costumes, parades, and huge bonfires.

The night before All Saints Day, which was the night of Samhain for the Celts, was eventually called All Hallows Eve and would later be known as Halloween.