

# Regional Pursuits

JUNE 2015 • VOLUME LXXXV



## Inside this issue:

Mayor Jim Darling Elected LRGVDC President	1
Board Member Recognition	2
LRGVDC Staff Recognized for Years of Service	2
New Brownsville ISD CERT Instructors	3
NADO Awards and Recognition	3
Public Transit in Starr & Zapata Counties	4
The Passing of a Visionary	4
Memorial Day Celebration in Harlingen	5

## MCALLEN MAYOR JIM DARLING ELECTED LRGVDC PRESIDENT



The remaining LRGVDC Board officers elected are: 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Brownsville Mayor Tony Martinez; 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, San Benito Mayor Celeste Sanchez; Secretary, Member-at-Large Hon. Norma G. Garcia; Treasurer, Edinburg Council Member Richard Molina; and Immediate Past President, Harlingen Mayor Chris Boswell. Other LRGVDC Board of Directors include: Commissioner Sophia Benavidez, Cameron County; Commissioner Eduardo “Eddie” Cantu, Hidalgo County; Judge Aurelio “Keter” Guerra, Willacy County; Commissioner Pilar Garza, City of Alamo; Mayor Irene Munoz, City of Donna; Commissioner Daniel A. Guzman, City of Edcouch; Mayor Victor Gonzalez, Jr., City of La Feria; Alderwoman Rosa Perez, City of La Villa; Mayor Henry Hinojosa, City of Mercedes; Mayor Pro-tem Norie Gonzalez Garza, City of Mission; Mayor Ambrosio “Amos” Hernandez, City of Pharr; Commissioner Shay Cantu, City of San Juan; Ms. Wanda F. Garza, STC; Dr. Stella E. Garcia, TSTC; Mr. Troy Allen, Delta Lake Irrigation District; Mr. Ronald Mills, Port Mansfield PUB & Willacy County Navigation District; Mr. Steve Brewer, Member-at-Large; Mayor Pro-tem Eddy Gonzalez, Member-at-Large; and Mr. Arturo Ramirez, Grassroots Organizations.

At the May Membership meeting of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC), Jim Darling, Mayor of McAllen was unanimously elected President of the Board of Directors. “It is an honor to have been elected as the new LRGVDC President, and I look forward to continuing the positive momentum and progress created by past presidents of this organization. The regional approach is the most effective way to address the comprehensive needs of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, and the LRGVDC will continue to be a leader in this regard. I ask all the LRGVDC membership for their cooperation and I look forward to a great working relationship,” stated Mayor Darling.

The LRGVDC Board meetings are held the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month. For more information on meeting times and locations please visit our website at [www.lrgvdc.org](http://www.lrgvdc.org).



*REGIONAL PURSUITS is the newsletter published by the LRGVDC.*

*This publication is financed in part through funding assistance from State and Federal grants. REGIONAL PURSUITS is available without cost and inquiries should be directed to:*

Ken Jones, Executive Director  
Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council  
301 W. Railroad Street, Weslaco, TX 78596  
Email: [info@lrgvdc.org](mailto:info@lrgvdc.org)  
Website: [lrgvdc.org](http://lrgvdc.org)  
956-682-3481, fax 956-631-4670

# BOARD MEMBER RECOGNITION



At the June 24th Board Meeting, newly elected President, McAllen Mayor Jim Darling presented plaques to San Juan Mayor Pro-tem Armando Garza, Jr. (below left) and Member-at-Large Donato Medina (below right) for outstanding and dedicated service to the Board. Not pictured are Immediate Past President, Mayor Chris Boswell, City of Harlingen; Mayor Leopoldo "Polo" Palacios, Jr., City of Pharr; and Mr. John Mendoza, Donna ISD .



## LRGVDC STAFF RECOGNIZED FOR YEARS OF SERVICE



Pictured in front L-R: Raul Madero, 9-1-1 Dept, 5 years; Monica A. Rocha, Area Agency on Aging, 5 years; Vivianna Moreno, Area Agency on Aging, 10 years; Joanna Saenz, Finance Dept, 15 years; Rosa Resio, Area Agency on Aging, 10 years; Mayor Jim Darling, LRGVDC 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President; Ken Jones, LRGVDC Executive Director; Dora C. Moreno, Area Agency on Aging, 5 years. Pictured in back row L-R: Adalia Gonzalez, Finance Dept, 10 years; Rodolfo Alejandro, Valley Metro, 5 years; Dora Cruz, Valley Metro, 5 years; Jaime Garza, Area Agency on Aging, 5 years; Jose A. Garcia, Kr., 9-1-1 Dept, 5 years; Hector Chapa, 9-1-1 Dept, 5 years; Andrew Canon, HCMPO, 10 years. Not pictured: Laura D. Wylie, Area Agency on Aging, 10 years. Congratulations staff and thank you for your years of dedicated service.

# New Brownsville ISD TEEN CERT Instructors



On May 4 - 8 the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) course was taught to 13 faculty and staffers from all of the schools within Brownsville ISD – Career & Technical Education Departments by LRGVDC staff with the assistance of the Brownsville Fire Department and the BISD PD. The main goal of this course was to train and certify these facilitators so that they can in turn provide the CERT course to High School Students as part of the requirements by the Texas Education Agency, Disaster Response curriculum.

The Teen CERT Train-the-Trainer course is a modified CERT Train-the-Trainer course specifically designed for teachers to teach CERT to high school aged students (non-teachers should register for 428, CERT Train the Trainer). The Train-the-Trainer course focuses on preparing instructors to:

⇒ Convey the messages and intent of the CERT Program (e.g., safety, teamwork, place in home, school, and community emergency preparedness and response)

- ⇒ Assure that participants achieve the objectives of CERT Basic Training
- ⇒ Create a comfortable yet managed learning environment
- ⇒ Course topics include (delivery modified for teaching teens)
- ⇒ CERT history, program purpose, and values
- ⇒ Materials and requirements for the CERT Basic Training course
- ⇒ Roles of the CERT instructor
- ⇒ Effective presentation of CERT Basic Training content
- ⇒ May include hands-on activities dealing with fire extinguishers, cribbing, first aid, and basic search and rescue
- ⇒ How to set up and conduct a final exercise wherein students demonstrate proficiency in course topics



## NADO Awards and Recognition

Regional Partners Received NADO (National Association of Development Organizations) Awards and Recognition for the Spanish Language Public Safety Early Weather Warning System. Pictured left – right: Manuel Cruz, LRGVDC Director of Homeland Security; Jaime Guzman, City of Pharr Fire Chief; George Garrett, City of Weslaco Emergency Manager; Javier Garza, South Padre Island Assistant Police Chief; Ken Jones, LRGVDC Executive Director, Yvonne Garza, Texas DPS; Barry Goldsmith, NWS Brownsville Warning Coordinator Meteorologist.

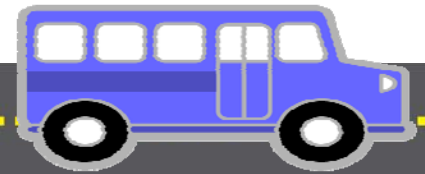


# LRGVDC - Valley Metro is Now The Starr and Zapata County Rural Transit Service Provider

Community Action Council of South Texas (CACST) notified TxDOT Public Transportation Division that on May 31, 2015 they would stop administering and operating the rural transportation program in Jim Hogg, Duval, Starr and Zapata Counties. As a result of that notification TxDOT notified the affected counties and advised them that they needed to consider taking over the program for their respective county or designate an agency as their rural transit provider. Also, TxDOT contacted all transit providers around the affected area to advise them of the situation and query the interest from the group.

On Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup> Jim Hogg and Duval Counties designated R.E.A.L. Inc. (Rural Economic Assistance League) out of Alice, Texas as their provider. Starr and Zapata Counties designated the LRGVDC as their provider. TxDOT required that our Board acknowledge and accept the designation which they did at their May 27<sup>th</sup> meeting. Additionally, on June 1<sup>st</sup> the 25 CACST employees assigned to Starr and Zapata Counties began working as LRGVDC employees, and that same day under LRGVDC leadership transit service continued on schedule with no gap.

TxDOT, R.E.A.L. Inc., and the LRGVDC coordinated the assets and funding distributions among the two new designated providers. On an annual basis TxDOT currently uses a funding formula based on “needs” and “performance”. Based on their forecast, it is estimated that the LRGVDC will be awarded 69.7 percent of the total state and federal funds. The Texas Transportation Commission meeting on June 25, 2015 culminated the service transition by awarding federal and state funds to the new rural transit districts.



## THE PASSING OF A VISIONARY

The LRGVDC staff was saddened to learn of the passing of Mr. Juan Gomez, Director of 9-1-1, on Saturday, May 16, 2015 of an apparent heart attack. Mr. Gomez joined the LRGVDC in April of 2000, a few years after he retired as a Post Master with the U. S. Postal Service. He left us way too soon, 3 weeks after his 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary with the LRGVDC, and 5 weeks after his 74<sup>th</sup> birthday. He started his career with the LRGVDC as a Technician II. Back in 2000 they were a staff of 4: the previous Director and 3 Tech IIs (including Mr.



Gomez). When the Director position became available he was promoted to that position and soon thereafter began to shape the Program into his vision of a cohesive unit with the goal of addressing and mapping every household in the RGV into the 9-1-1 Emergency System. We will miss his enthusiasm, the way he cared for staff and hearing him whistle as he walked through the halls.

# MEMORIAL DAY CELEBRATION IN HARLINGEN

Chief Paul R. Williams, Director of the LRGVDC Regional Police Academy and Training Center, was the keynote speaker at the Memorial Day celebration at Pendleton Park in Harlingen, TX, on May 25, 2015. The event was sponsored and organized by the Harlingen Police Department, and Harlingen Mayor Chris Boswell delivered the proclamation for the event on behalf of the City of Harlingen. Following Mayor Boswell's proclamation, Pastor Bill Reagan did the invocation and Mr. Jaime Carmona sang the National Anthem.

Chief Williams spoke about the meaning of Memorial Day and its distinction from Veteran's Day and Armed Forces Day. "Memorial Day is a federal holiday in the United States for remembering the men and women who died while serving in the country's armed forces. The holiday, which is observed every year on the last Monday of May, was formerly known as Decoration Day and originated after the American Civil War to commemorate the Union and Confederate soldiers who died in the war. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Memorial Day had been extended to honor all Americans who died while in the military service.

Chief Williams remarked about sacrifices of those veterans who paid the ultimate price for the freedoms we enjoy each day in battles and places that many of us have never heard of or have forgotten about:

- ◆ The American Revolution
- ◆ Battles of Lexington and Concord
- ◆ Capture of Ft Ticonderoga
- ◆ Olive Branch Petition



**Harlingen Mayor Chris Boswell, Chief Paul R. Williams, Officer Sal Carmona, Pastor Bill Reagan, Mr. Jaime Carmona**

- ◆ World War I – The War to End All Wars
  - ◆ Battle of Hill 60
  - ◆ Evacuation of Gallipoli
  - ◆ Battle of Belleau Wood
- ◆ World War II – The Big One
  - ◆ Iraq Campaign
  - ◆ Battle of Hill 609
  - ◆ Mount Suribachi
- ◆ Korea – The Korean Conflict
  - ◆ Battle of Bloody Ridge
  - ◆ Battle of Chosin Reservoir
  - ◆ Battle of Old Baldy
- ◆ Vietnam – The Vietnam Conflict
  - ◆ Tet Offensive
  - ◆ Battle of Hue
  - ◆ Hamburger Hill

◆ Places during the Cold War and beyond such as: Nicaragua, Cambodia, Granada, Panama, Libya, Kuwait, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan – every climate and place and on all parts of the globe."

Chief Williams also reminded the audience of some of the rights Americans have which are enumerated in the Bill of Rights and the U.S. Constitution. He closed by quoting Irving Berlin:

"While the storm clouds gather far across the sea; Let us swear allegiance to a land that's free; Let us all be grateful to a land so far; As we raise our voices in a solemn prayer: God Bless America; Land that I love; Stand beside her, and guide her; Thru the night with the light from above; From the mountains, to the prairies; To the oceans, white with foam; God bless America; My home sweet home.

Mayor Boswell thanked Chief Williams for his speech and stated that it "got them motivated." Chief Williams received a standing ovation and many thanks from members of the crowd following the event.



**Harlingen Police/Fire Department Color Guard**

# Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2015-2016

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Mayor James E. Darling City of McAllen	President
Mayor Tony Martinez City of Brownsville	1 <sup>st</sup> Vice President
Mayor Celeste Sanchez City of San Benito	2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice President
Honorable Norma G. Garcia Member-at-Large	Secretary
Council Member Richard Molina City of Edinburg	Treasurer
Mayor Chris Boswell City of Harlingen	Immediate Past President

## REMAINING BOARD MEMBERS

Commissioner Sofia Benavides	Cameron County
Commissioner Eduardo "Eddie" Cantu	Hidalgo County
Judge Aurelio "Keter" Guerra	Willacy County
Commissioner Pilar Garza	City of Alamo
Mayor Irene Munoz	City of Donna
Commissioner Daniel A. Guzman	City of Edcouch
Mayor Victor Gonzales Jr.	City of La Feria
Alderdwoman Rosa Perez	City of La Villa
Mayor Henry Hinojosa	City of Mercedes
Mayor Pro-tem Norie Gonzalez Garza	City of Mission
Mayor Ambrosio "Amos" Hernandez	City of Pharr
Commissioner Shay Cantu	City of San Juan
Mayor David Suarez	City of Weslaco
Ms. Wanda F. Garza	South Texas College
Dr. Stella E. Garcia	Texas State Technical College
Mr. Troy Allen	Delta Lake Irrigation District
Mr. Ronald Mills	Willacy County Navigation District
Mr. Steve Brewer	Member-at-Large
Mayor Pro-tem Eddy Gonzalez	Member-at-Large
Mr. Arturo Ramirez	Grassroots Organizations

## CONTACTS FOR ADMINISTERED PROGRAMS

Kenneth N. Jones, Jr.	Executive Director	Tom Logan	Director, Valley Metro
Crystal Balboa	Director, Finance	Manuel Cruz	Director, Homeland Security
Anna Hernandez	Director, Human Resources	Marcie Oviedo	Director, Regional Planning & Services
Victor Morales	Director, Procurement	Sergio Castro	Director, 9-1-1 Services
Joe Gonzalez	Director, Area Agency on Aging	Paul Williams	Director, Regional Police Academy & Training Center
Terrie Salinas	Director, Economic Development	Andrew Canon	Director, Hidalgo County MPO

PRSRT STD  
 U.S. POSTAGE  
 PAID  
 PERMIT NO. 31  
 McALLEN, TX  
 78501

**Lower Rio Grande Valley  
Development Council**

301 W. Railroad Street • Weslaco, TX 78596

