

This Month:

Valley Butterflies
Hold a Food Drive
Make-A-Wish RGV
Valley Birding
CCRGV Receives Grant
Over The Edge - BGC
Winter Texan Evolution
MMA Commemorative Parade

IN PRINT, ON-LINE & ON FACEBOOK

The Valley Spotlight

FREE
TAKE ME HOME

March 2016

The Little Paper You'll Want To Keep & Share

Vol. 2 No. 10



Butterflies Of The Rio Grande Valley



March 14th is Learn About Butterflies Day

More than 700 species of butterflies can be found in the United States. Over 300 of these can be found here in the Valley. Nearly 150 butterfly species can only be seen in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, or by traveling to Mexico.

Butterflies are beautiful, flying insects with large scaly wings. Like all insects, they have six jointed legs, 3 body parts, a pair of antennae, compound eyes, and an exoskeleton. The three body parts are the head, thorax (the chest), and abdomen (the tail end).

The butterfly's body is covered by tiny sensory hairs. The four wings and the six legs of the butterfly are attached to the thorax. The thorax contains the muscles that make the legs and wings move.

Butterflies are very good fliers. They have two pairs of large wings covered with colorful, iridescent scales in overlapping rows. Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) are the only insects that have scaly wings. The wings are attached to the butterfly's thorax (mid-section). Veins support the delicate wings and nourish them with blood.

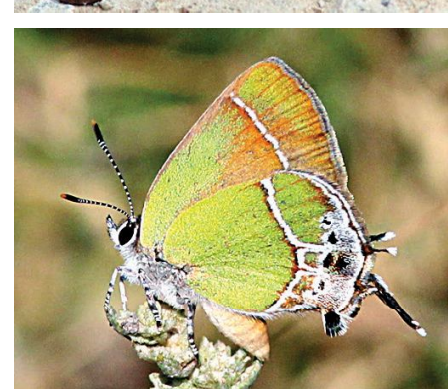
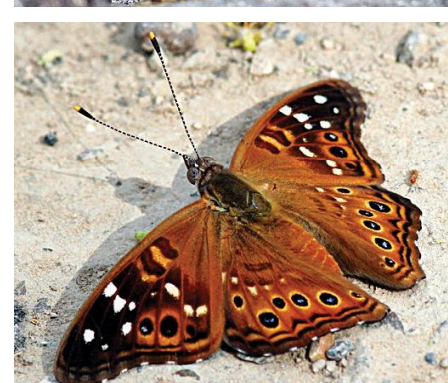
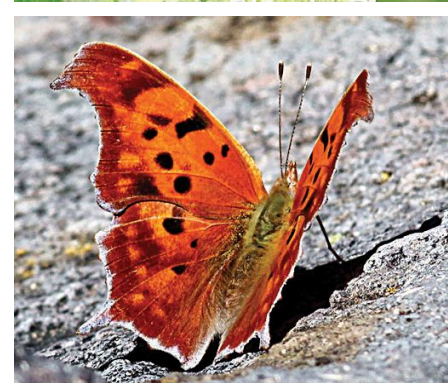
Butterflies can only fly if their body temperature is above 86 degrees. Butterflies sun themselves to warm up in cool weather. As butterflies age, the color of the wings fades and the wings become ragged. The speed at which butterflies fly varies among butterfly species.

The fastest butterflies (some skippers) can fly at about 30 mile per hour or faster. Slow flying butterflies fly about 5 mph.

Butterflies and moths undergo complete metamorphosis in which they go through four different life stages. **Egg** - A butterfly starts its life as an egg, often laid on a leaf. **Larva** - The larva (caterpillar) hatches from an egg and eats leaves or flowers almost constantly. The caterpillar molts (loses its old skin) many times as it grows. The caterpillar will increase up to several thousand times in size before pupating. **Pupa** - It turns into a pupa (chrysalis); this is a resting stage. **Adult** - A beautiful, flying adult emerges. This adult will continue the cycle.

Butterflies are found all over the world and in all types of environments. Most butterfly species, however, are found in tropical areas, especially tropical rainforests.

Many butterflies migrate in order to avoid adverse environmental conditions. Most migrate relatively short distances (like the Painted Lady, the Red Admiral, and the Common Buckeye), but a few (like some Monarchs) migrate thousands of miles.



Learn More About Butterflies
nationalbutterflycenter.org



National Butterfly Center
3333 Butterfly Park Drive
Mission, TX 78572
956-583-5400

rgvbutterflies.blogspot.com

Spring

by Omar Rodriguez
 Manager of Communication & Advocacy
 Food Bank of the Rio Grande Valley
 724 N. Cage Blvd., Pharr, TX
 PO Box 6251, McAllen, Texas 78502

Spring is an eternal time of renewal. Some of our rituals include spring cleaning and observing spiritual celebrations. Between those time-honored events and spring break and the RGV Livestock Show, there's not much time to do much else. Or is there?

One year, at the Food Bank RGV, we took a look at how many pounds of food drive donations we collected. It was the spring of 2010 and the total weight was 64 pounds. Sixty-four pounds of food donated for the entire month! Bear in mind, that the recommended amount of food for a person in need is 42.5 lbs. per month. This is just a supplement mind you, but if a person is still in need of more food the Food Bank RGV will help them. But how do we help when we receive 64 pounds in one month?!



Hunger doesn't take a vacation, it doesn't take a break. It lingers with each bill a family receives; with each car repair or medical emergency. It's always ready to pounce.

So, please, this spring consider holding a food drive through your church or business. It's a great team building project and can help get your group plenty of community exposure.



Find out more:

www.foodbankrgv.com/howtohelp-2/hold-a-food-drive

Some of the items we need: individual-sized, easy open soups, snacks, or protein items (beanie weenie, Vienna sausages, etc.), peanut butter, and individual sized tuna in water.

Texas National Bank's 2nd Annual Driving for Wishes Golf Classic Benefitting Make-A-Wish Rio Grande Valley

Texas National Bank held their 2nd Annual Driving for Wishes Golf Classic to benefit Make-A-Wish® Rio Grande Valley. Texas National Bank teamed up with the Palm Valley Golf Course to make wishes come true for children with life-threatening medical conditions in the Rio Grande Valley.

The goal was to round-up golfers to help Texas National Bank and Make-A-Wish make a minimum of 8 "Wishes" come true for children in our community. The event surpassed the initial 40 team target field and was able to contribute \$66,487 to Make-A-Wish RGV!

Texas National Bank would like to thank its sponsors for their support in helping make this event a success.

Texas National Bank is proud to serve the Rio Grande Valley since 1920, making it the oldest National Bank in the Rio Grande Valley. Texas National Bank is also a minority owned institution and one of only 15 Hispanic owned National Banks in the United States.

The Bank is passionately focused on providing personalized community banking services to its client base. Texas National Bank currently has four convenient locations in Mercedes, Weslaco, Edinburg, and McAllen.

Another location is coming soon in Mission. At just under \$200MM in assets Texas National Bank is able to deliver personalized service and prides itself on quick decision making due to its local ownership.

The Board and Management of the Bank expect continued growth for the Bank and look forward to serving the needs of the Rio Grande Valley Community. We invite all of you to:

Come Grow with Us!

For more information on signing up for next year's Driving for Wishes, referring a child, or volunteering, please call the Make-A-Wish office, (956) 686-9474.



www.riograndevalley.wish.org



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True Tales of a Valley Birder

Sponsored by Keith Hackland (alamoinn@aol.com)

A Day In The Life Of A Bird Guide By Mary Beth Stowe

How would I describe a typical bird-guiding day in the Lower Rio Grande Valley? Fabulous! Client birders ... everyone is different, and everyone has a unique list of target birds, whether it's their first time to the Valley and everything is new, or it's a seasoned hard-core birder who hops a plane to see that one bird that will put them over 700 species for North America ABA list area!



I work at Alamo Inn B&B, Gear & Tours. When a guest coming to stay with us expresses an interest in guiding services, the first thing we ask them for is their target list – meaning a list of the birds they wish to see. From there we plan an itinerary that will hopefully enable them to see as many of their targets as possible within the time frame they'll be here. Some targets include birds that show up very rarely (like White-throated Thrush, Crimson-collared Grosbeak, and Northern Jacana), and we have to be honest with them about the unlikelihood of seeing those birds, but when they do happen to show up (e.g., all three of the aforementioned vagrants are presently in the Valley), we make a special effort to see those birds, and pick up the more common birds in the process.

in the Valley, so a trip to Starr County can be very profitable. Because of the limited habitat, the bird list for this trip will run anywhere between 50 and 70 species.



Hidalgo County.

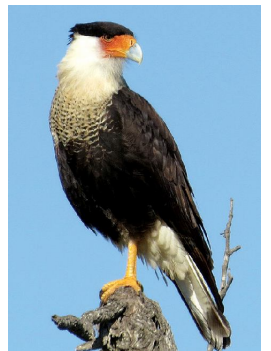
Close to the Inn, there are several hotspots where a variety of Valley birds can be found, and if some of these parks are hosting rarities at the time of the guests' visit, we target those places. These trips can yield between 70 and 100 species due to the variety of habitats visited.

Cameron County.

This route is usually reserved for folks who want to see the Aplomado Falcon and other local raptors and grassland species. During spring migration, a visit to South Padre Island is not to be missed, and a day list of 90 to 100 species is not unusual!

I advise clients that for me visual cues are weaker, but my ears are great: vocalizations lured me into birding at a young age, and I find birds by hearing them. Most clients love that arrangement, as they tend to be good at spotting things, but as others have said, "Nothing beats local experience," and more than one client has mentioned that my guiding has saved them a lot of wandering!

We usually discuss meals ahead of time. Most birders are perfectly happy to eat on the fly, either bringing a sandwich or snacks with them (which they can prepare ahead of time at the Inn), or picking up something along the way. It's a little trickier planning for a sit-down meal during the day, as we're often out in the boonies, but for the most part we're never far from civilization.



No matter where we go in the Valley, my own schedule is always the same: a 7:00 pickup and 5:00 drop-off. There are three "routes" that I do somewhat consistently based on the most common bird requests:

Starr County.

There are three Valley specialties that are possible here and few other places, but many visiting birders are also in need of desert specialties that reach their easternmost range here



I also usually ask if walking is a problem, as some of the target birds may require a hike of at least a mile. Thankfully the landscape here is flat (for the most part). There are many road-birding routes that can log a good number of species without even getting out of the car. During winter many parks stock feeders where a birder with limited mobility can relax on a bench and enjoy close looks at many of the specialties. Sometimes a birder's visit and the local weather don't go well together. I've never had to cancel a trip due to the weather, but we came close when the remnants of Hurricane Patricia blasted through! It's during those times when it pays to have a good sense of humor!



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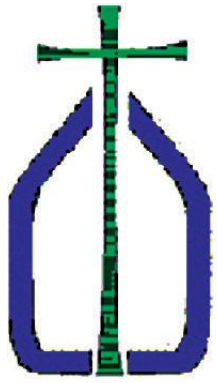
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Photo Credit Reid & Pam Allen





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Catholic Charities

of the Rio Grande Valley

Catholic Charities is Recipient of Superior Grant

On January 21, 2016, Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley (CCRGV) became the recipient of the fourth quarter grant totaling to \$5,000 from Superior Health Plan at 3900 N 10th St, in McAllen, Texas.

Funding will go to the CCRGV Disaster Relief Program to aid valley families affected by storms. Families that qualify will receive assistance with disaster case management, home assessments, and building materials or appliances.

CCRGV is extremely thankful to Superior Health and to the Community Ambassador, Mary Lou Cavazos, for the support. Superior Health Plan (Superior) is a managed health care company that provides health care for many Texans. Superior works with the State of Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to offer STAR (Medicaid), Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), CHIP Perinatal Care, and STAR+PLUS in many cities and counties across Texas. The sister company, Superior HealthPlan Network, manages the STAR Health program on a statewide basis.



Courtesy of CCRGV and Superior (Left to Right) Simon Casas, Alma Seong, Sr. Norma Pimentel, Mary Lou Cavazos in the CCRGV San Juan Office.

700 N. Virgen de San Juan Blvd. * San Juan, Texas 78589 * (956) 702-4088 * Fax (956) 782-0418
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Vietnam War Commemorative Parade March 5

Marine Military Academy in Harlingen, TX will hold the Vietnam War Commemorative Parade Saturday, March 5 at 10 a.m. on the MMA Parade Ground. The public is encouraged to attend this special event.

Superintendent Col. R. Glenn Hill said the parade is to express gratitude to those veterans who unselfishly served in one of the most controversial wars in U.S. history.

“During the Vietnam War, the public’s dissatisfaction with the war was often reflected in the treatment of the men and women who served there,” Hill said. “Fortunately, over time, we have come to recognize that the men and women of our armed services should be honored for their sacrifices.”



On May 25, 2012, President Barack Obama proclaimed May 28, 2012 – Nov. 11, 2025 to be the Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War.

“NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim May 28, 2012, through November 11, 2025, as the Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War. I call upon Federal, State, and local officials to honor our Vietnam veterans, our fallen, our wounded, those unaccounted for, our former prisoners of war, their families, and all who served with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.”

source: www.whitehouse.gov

According to Col Hill, MMA decided to hold the Vietnam War Commemorative Parade the same year the school celebrated its 50th anniversary.

The Vietnam War was a civil war between communist North Vietnam and non-communist South Vietnam. The war endured nearly 20 years, from Nov. 1, 1955 to April 30, 1975.

In March 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson made the decision to send U.S. combat forces into Vietnam to support South Vietnam. On March 8, 1965, 3,900 U.S. Marines waded ashore China Beach, which marked the beginning of the American ground war. The U.S. stayed involved until March 29, 1975.

At the parade, there will be special reserved

seating for Vietnam War veterans. During the parade, the veterans will join the MMA superintendent for the ceremonial pass in review.

For more information on the Vietnam War Commemorative Parade, call (956) 421-9225 or e-mail atkinson@MMA-TX.org.

Brothers In War: The Charlie Company And The War In Vietnam

Not having served in Vietnam, I can not imagine what our service men and women encountered and experienced there. I do however have a deep gratitude for their service and the sacrifices that they made in service to our nation. I recently watched a documentary film, Brothers In War: The Charlie Company And The War In Vietnam. I was deeply moved by the stories told and the images conjured. As a member of the generation reaching adulthood as these soldiers returned from their tours of duty, I am saddened by the way in which they were disrespected by many Americans at that time. I say THANK YOU, not only to Vietnam veterans but to all who serve and have served in our nation’s military.

The following is a description of the documentary, Brothers In War. I highly recommend it.

A true band of brothers, the Charlie Company was one of the last combat infantry companies in the Vietnam War to be drafted, trained and sent to battle together.

Brothers In War tells the gripping story of the Charlie Company, tracing their journey of terror, pain and camaraderie from boot camp to combat to home.

Narrated by Charlie Sheen, who rose to stardom after his 1986 performance as a Vietnam soldier in the Academy Award-winning film Platoon, Brothers In War follows a group of boys who, if nothing else, had one thing in common: they were removed from their familiar lives and thrown together eight thousand miles from home, tasked to fight and die for their country in a world far beyond their comprehension.

In 1967 the young soldiers of the Charlie Company were tasked to fight in one of Vietnam’s most difficult terrains: the Mekong Delta, homeland of the Viet Cong. The company entered an alien land of murderous heat, chest-deep mud, and unforgiving jungles festooned with deadly mines and booby traps.

Masters of the delta, the Viet Cong hid in swamps and rice paddies, silently navigating

the familiar terrain with ease as the American soldiers floundered.

For a year, the Charlie Company draftees chased the Viet Cong across the watery landscape, a war of stillness interrupted by sudden, terrible bursts of violence. By the end of that yearlong combat tour, the company had suffered tragic losses, with 25 soldiers killed and 105 wounded, only to return home to America to a growing tide of anti-war discontent.

The shared horrors of their time in Vietnam bound the Charlie Company members for life. Today, the survivors of Charlie Company still get together every year for a reunion.

A true story of real patriotism, Brothers In War weaves together first-person accounts and digitally remastered archival footage, including the soldiers’ own home movies and personal audio tapes, to recount an important and difficult time in American history – and the young men who heroically sacrificed their lives in the process.

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while raising much needed funds for Boys & Girls Clubs.

I am writing you today on behalf of the thousands of youth and teens we serve for a generous investment to help make the Over the Edge Experience a huge success. Your help would allow Boys & Girls Clubs to provide meaningful programming in the summer months which focus on academic success, healthy lifestyles and civic engagement for youth and teens.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



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Site	ADDRESS	DAYS	HOURS OF OPERATION	NOTES
Affordable Homes of South Texas McAllen	1420 Erie Ave. McAllen, TX 78501	Monday-Thursday APPT ONLY Saturday	8 am - 5pm 9am-12pm	Opening Date: Jan 25 Closing Date: April 14
Affordable Homes of South Texas McAllen	500 S. 15th St. McAllen, TX 78501	Tuesday & Thursday WALK INS	5 pm - 7pm	Opening Date: Jan 26 Closing Date: April 14
Affordable Homes of South Texas Weslaco	134 W. 5th St. Weslaco, TX, 78596	Monday-Thursday APPT ONLY Saturday	8 am - 5pm 9am-12pm	Opening Date: Jan 25 Closing Date: April 14
Affordable Homes of South Texas Weslaco	134 W. 5th St. Weslaco, TX, 78596	Tuesday & Thursday WALK INS	5 pm - 7pm	Opening Date: Jan 26 Closing Date: April 14
Bowie Elementary Parental Literacy Center	811 E. Bowie Alamo, TX, 78516	Tuesday & Thursday	5:30 pm - 8:00 pm	Opening Date: Feb. 9 Closing Date: April 7 CLOSED SPRING BREAK MARCH 13-19
Calvary Baptist Church	1600 Harvey St. McAllen, TX, 78501	Monday Thursday	5 pm - 8pm 1pm - 4pm	Opening Date: Jan 25 Closing Date: March 24
College Career & Technology Academy Parental Engagement Center	1100 E. Hwy 83 Pharr, TX, 78577	Monday Saturday	5:30 pm - 8:00 pm 9:00 am - 2:00 pm	Opening Date: Feb. 13 Closing Date: April 4 CLOSED FEBRUARY 15 & SPRING BREAK MARCH 13-19
Goodwill Industries	3502 C, 69 S I Rd Edinburg, TX 78542	Saturday	9:00 am - 2:00 pm	Opening Date: Jan 31 Closing Date: April 3
La Joya I.S.D. Palmview High School	3901 N. La Homa Road Mission, TX, 78572	Monday & Thursday	5 pm - 7:30 pm	Opening Date: Jan 28 Closing Date: April 7 CLOSED: FEBRUARY 15, 2016 & SPRING BREAK MARCH 13-19
Palmview Community Center	3401 Jordan Ave. McAllen, TX, 78503	Tuesday & Wednesday Saturday	5:00 pm - 8:00 pm 9:00 am - 2:00 pm	Opening Date: Jan 2 Closing Date: April 6 CLOSED HOLY SATURDAY March 26
Rio Grande City Hall	101 S. Washington St. Rio Grande City, TX, 78582	Monday & Wednesday	5 pm - 7:30 pm	Opening Date: Jan 27 Closing Date: April 6
Roma High School	2021 N. US Highway 83 - Roma, Texas 78584.	Tuesday & Thursday	4 pm - 6 pm	Opening Date: Jan 26 Closing Date: April 7 CLOSED SPRING BREAK MARCH 13-19
South Texas College - McAllen Tech Library	3700 W. Military Hwy. (BLDG A) McAllen, TX, 78503	Monday-Thursday	11:00 am-5:00pm	Opening Date: Feb 1 Closing Date: March 10
The University Of Texas – Rio Grande Valley CESS Building Room 1.201	1407 E. Freddy Gonzalez Dr. Edinburg, TX, 78539	Saturday	9:00am - 12:00 pm	Opening Date: Jan 30 Closing Date: March 5

Call (956) 607-9030 or email us at unitedwayvita9030@gmail.com

Jeepers Enjoy Super Bowl

by Alyssa Cavasos

Everybody knows the biggest party of the year is going to be in correlation with the biggest game of the year, the Super Bowl. So it is no surprise that February’s Jeep Night was going to be held on Super Sunday.

Jeepers gathered for Jeep Night’s “Super Bowl Party” at Big Lew’s place. Jeepers took a drive out to San Manuel around 3pm. Guests were welcome to activities such as football, basketball, and corn hole before and after the Super Bowl game. Jeepers were also treated to the Teeter Totter that was also present at this year’s McAllen International Car Fest. Barbecue was provided to those who attended Jeep Night, as was an array of side dishes and desserts provided by those in attendance. Kick off for the Broncos vs. Panthers game was at 5:30 pm, lasting well into the evening. Following the Bronco victory of 24-10 guests were able to enjoy a tranquil evening around the fire pit and the absence of city lights. The pressures of competition were off this month and no awards were presented at February’s Jeep Night.

As for Jeep Night in March more information will be known as the day approaches. Jeep Night is always held on the second Thursday of the month, unless stated otherwise. To keep updated on all Jeep Night information feel free to contact Big Lew at 956-984-4454. Guests can also receive more information on our official Facebook page “Jeep Night powered by Burns Motors”.



Jac-Lin's FLORIST & Art Gallery



Jacque Hull, Owner
jaclins.florist@gmail.com
www.jaclinsflorist.com

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956-686-5252

Jac-Lin's Florist and Art Gallery

is on the *McAllen Artwalk* trail
every first Friday of the month through May.

Lester is struggling through a bus station with two huge and obviously heavy suitcases when a stranger walks up to him and asks "Have you got the time?"

Lester sighs, puts down the suitcases and glances at his wrist. "It's a quarter to six," he says.

"Hey, that's a pretty fancy watch!" exclaims the stranger.

Lester brightens a little. "Yeah, it's not bad. Check this out," and he shows him a time zone display for every time zone in the world.

He hits a few buttons and from somewhere on the watch a voice says "The time is eleven 'til six" in a very West Texas accent.

A few more buttons and the same voice says something in Japanese. Lester continues "I've put in regional accents for each city."

The display is unbelievably high quality and the voice is simply astounding. The stranger is struck dumb with admiration. "I want to buy this watch!" says the stranger.

"Oh, no, it's not ready for sale yet; I'm still working out the bugs," says the inventor. "But look at this," and he proceeds to demonstrate that the watch is also a very credible little FM radio receiver with a digital tuner,

a sonar device that can measure distances up to 100 feet, a pager with thermal paper printout and, most impressive of all, the capacity for voice recordings of up to 300 books.

"I've got to have this watch!" says the stranger.

"No, you don't understand; it's not ready-"

"I'll give you \$1000 for it!"

"Oh, no, I've already spent more than -" ... "I'll give you \$5000 for it!"

"But it's just not -" ... "I'll give you \$15,000 for it!" And the stranger pulls out a checkbook.

Lester stops to think. He's only put about \$8500 into materials and development, and with \$15,000 he can make another one and have it ready for merchandising in only six months. The stranger frantically finishes writing the check and waves it in front of him. "Here it is, ready to hand to you right here and now. \$15,000. Take it or leave it."

Lester abruptly makes his decision. "OK," he says, and peels off the watch. They make the exchange and the stranger starts happily away.

"Hey, wait a minute," Lester points to the two huge suitcases he'd been trying to wrestle through the bus station, "Don't forget your batteries."

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		4	2		9	1		7
2		7		1			5	9
	9				8			3
6			9		1			2
3	2		4	7		9		
	7				5	6	3	4
7					2		9	8
	8		5		3	2	7	
9		2		8		3		

Sudoku No.: 10589

EASY

				7		3		
3		5	8					9
	2	7	4	3			6	
8		4	1	9		2		
	9		5		3			
	3							7
2				8				
			7	6				2
1	7						4	8

Sudoku No.: 37486

MEDIUM

3								5
			4	7				
2	8		1	9				
		9	8			3		
		2			4			
			6			1	8	
		7		6				9
5	4						1	
					3			

Sudoku No.: 61753

HARD

Fill in each square with one digit, using only the numbers one through nine | Numbers cannot repeat within an individual box of nine squares
Numbers cannot repeat down a column | Numbers cannot repeat across a row

Unreasonable Taxation

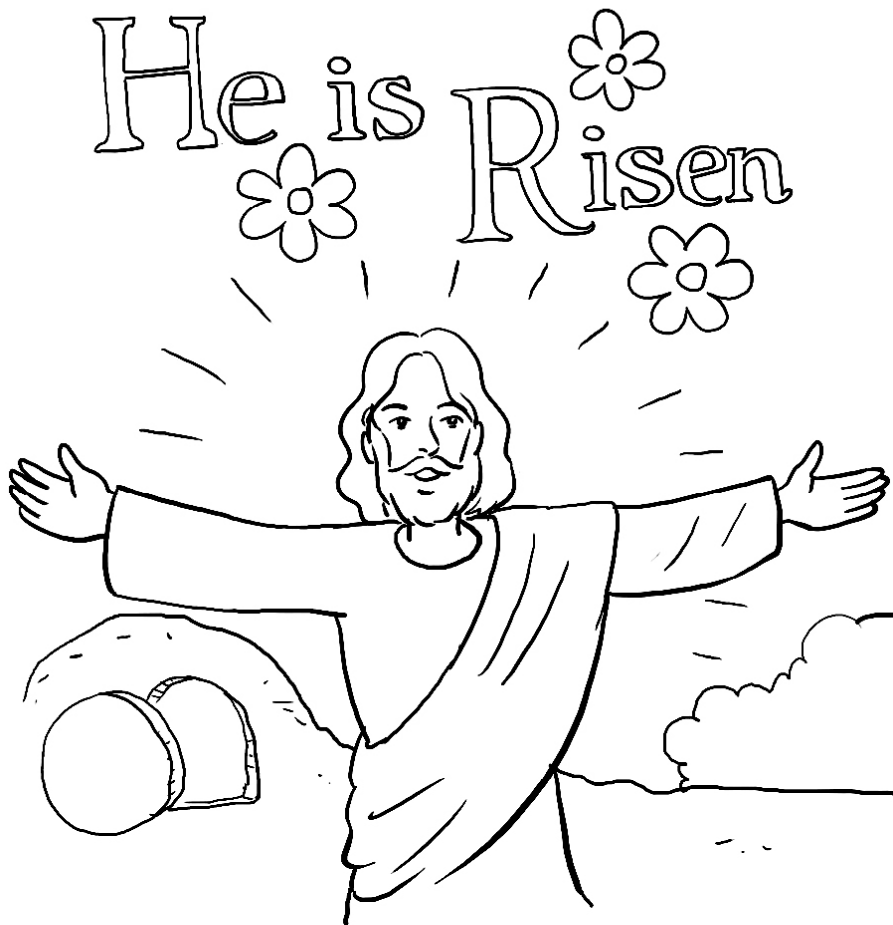
A little boy wanted \$100.00 very badly and prayed for weeks, but nothing happened. Then he decided to write God a letter requesting the \$100.00. When the postal authorities received the letter to God, USA, they decided to send it to the President. The president was so amused that he instructed his secretary to send the little boy a \$5.00 bill.

The president thought this would appear to be a lot of money to a little boy. The little boy was delighted with the \$5.00 bill and sat down to write a thank-you note to God, which read:

Dear God: Thank you very much for sending the money. However, I noticed that for some reason you sent it through Washington, DC, and those crooks deducted \$95.00 in taxes.

For Kids Only

No matter how old you are!



*On Easter Sunday, March 27
we celebrate the resurrection
of our Lord, Jesus Christ*

**Have Fun and Learn
while you solve these puzzles and
practice your coloring skills**

Find these words associated with Easter:
**CHOCOLATE, CANDY, DYE, EGGS, FLOWERS
HUNT, LILY, SPRING, SUNDAY, TULIPS**

F	R	N	K	M	D	E	O	E	T	N
C	A	N	D	Y	Y	S	F	T	K	E
G	C	E	W	D	U	K	B	A	S	M
H	O	O	U	N	B	H	F	L	P	M
U	V	I	D	K	M	G	L	O	I	U
N	M	A	G	R	F	O	O	C	L	F
T	Y	P	N	Z	Q	E	W	O	U	Y
P	C	E	I	P	J	G	E	H	T	L
D	I	Q	R	X	U	G	R	C	W	I
E	O	H	P	O	U	S	S	O	F	L
L	M	Z	S	S	R	X	H	C	V	Q

Help this leprechaun
find his way through
the maze to reach
the Pot O' Gold



Happy St. Patrick's Day!



Thursday, March 17th

An Evolving Winter Texan Population

by Rod Graham, publisher of The Valley Spotlight and WinterTexanInfo.com

When my wife, Cathy, and I first came to the Rio Grande Valley in 1999, we were amazed at what we witnessed here. We had never even heard of Winter Texans or The Rio Grande Valley. It was because of the fact that two of Cathy's uncles wintered here that we became aware of the Valley's existence and its tropical winter climate.

As we explored the region from South Padre Island to Falcon Reservoir in Zapata, TX we were astounded at the number of RV / Mobile Home Resorts. It seemed as though they were everywhere. Equally astounding to us was the vast number of recreational vehicles occupying the sites in these Winter Texan communities.

As full time RVers ourselves for a few years, we were used to traveling around the mid-west staying in state parks and private campgrounds. There were always more than enough RV sites to choose from and we never seemed "too close to our neighbors". Here in the Valley however, RV sites at that time were at a premium. Because of the sheer number of sites available, we did not have any trouble finding a place to park our 1979 Itasca motorhome, but we were side by side with hundreds of others.

We fell in love with the Valley immediately and have not looked back. Within a couple of years we severed all material ties with the mid-west and became permanent Texans.

We established a photography / publishing business here providing pictorial directories for RV / Mobile Home resorts and their residents. Over the past 16 + years we have established a working rapport with a great many of these resorts. Through this close affiliation, we have become acutely aware of the Winter Texan population, its nuances and idiosyncracies.

During our first few years in the Valley we observed that the vast majority of Winter Texans were retired farmers from the mid-west, particularly from Iowa, Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Missouri, Kansas and Nebraska.

The most popular activities for these retirees from our parents generation seemed to be square dancing, shuffleboard and card games of a wide variety. Every night of the week you could find a dance to attend. Either country or big band music was the style of music most provided. Entertainment was provided in many of the resorts which consisted mostly of local country bands or country artists, big band groups and accordion players coming from the same mid-west roots as those in the audience.

Some of the names I remember from those days are Red Johnson, Wee Willy, Al Mikesh, Fred King and the Good Knights, Jim King and the Texas Connection Band, Sherwin Linton, and Paul Pagel to name just a few. There were so many that you never had to worry about finding a show you had not seen before and for a ridiculously low ticket price of only \$2 or \$3.

Recreation halls were filled to capacity with audiences and dancers having a great time.

One thing that I noticed about the Winter Texan population in the early 21st century was a median age of 75 - 80 years old. Many had been wintering in the Valley since the big boom of the 1970s and 1980s when many new resorts were established and the Valley was heavily promoted throughout the mid-west.

During the first ten years of the new century it seemed as though nothing was changing, resorts were full and retirees were coming just as they had for many years prior. It was about 2010 when we started noticing a paradigm shift where Winter Texans were concerned. Resorts began noticing a drop in reservations for the next season. More and more mobile homes were coming up for sale in the resort parks. Long time Winter Texans were passing away or reaching an age where health issues prevented them from returning.

The Valley was hoping that a new generation of retirees (Baby Boomers) would come along and make up the difference. However, this has not happened to the degree that was hoped for. Some reasons for this are thought to be that folks are having to work longer and retire at a later age. Those who have retired may not have had as comprehensive a savings plan as the previous generation and do not have the disposable income which would allow them to travel. It is also believed by some that the Baby Boomer generation is more mobile and not as ready to come and stay in one area for 5 - 6 months at a time, they may be more likely to opt for a condo lifestyle rather than RVing.

Whatever the reason, it is obvious that the situation exists. In addition to lower numbers, the Winter Texan these days has a different outlook on activities which they enjoy while here in the Valley. While country entertainment and dancing is still readily available, more and more Winter Texans are looking for the Rock and Roll sounds of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Shuffleboard courts are not nearly as popular as

they once were. A more active retiree is enjoying biking, hiking and playing pickleball. Square dancing is still around, but not nearly to the degree it was in years past.

In 2007 I published the website www.wintertexaninfo.com. Over the past seven years the number of visitors to this website has steadily increased. This is an indicator that as the Winter Texan population has evolved from the previous generation of farmers to the more currently prevalent blue collar worker it is evident that the computer and the internet is a mainstay in their daily lives. Efficient, high speed internet service has gone from an amenity to a necessity if a resort wants to attract new residents. More and more Winter Texans are using current technology such as smart phones in their daily lives. And it is not going to stop changing.

Retirees are not going to stop coming to the Rio Grande Valley. We will get past this hump of decline in their numbers. According to a conversation I had with an officer of the Texas Recreational Vehicle Association, the current retiree is not as likely to purchase an RV as the previous generation did. They are more likely to look for condominium style accommodations. However, the next generation of retirees, those folks who are now in their 50s are showing an interest in owning an RV and living the RVers' lifestyle. So, let us do what is necessary to accommodate today's prospective Winter Texan by providing a more active and mobile lifestyle environment. And let's prepare to attract the next generation of retirees by promoting the Valley in ways that it will be noticed.

Several of the Valley's cities and resorts are already doing this by advertising in northern areas and promoting at RV shows and rallies throughout the United States and Canada. Some resorts are offering Canadians a discount due to the fact that the Canadian dollar is suffering due to low oil prices and other factors.

Over the years that I have been in the Valley, Winter Texans who have also wintered in other areas such as Florida and Arizona have told me that one of the biggest reasons that they return to the Valley is the warm reception that they receive from the local population. So let's keep it up. Let the winter visitor know how much we appreciate them and the contributions they make to the Valley while they are here. Not just financially, but also through their volunteerism and giving back to the communities in which they live.



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It's Time To Say Farewell to Our Winter Texan Friends!

As another Winter Texan Season draws to its close, we here at The Valley Spotlight say THANK YOU for joining us this winter.

We have enjoyed your contributions to the Rio Grande Valley, not only financially but in all the things you have done to make the RGV a more pleasant place to be.

Without you we could not have enjoyed all of the first class entertainment that comes to the Valley to perform while you are here.

Our hospitals and healthcare facilities will surely miss all of you who selflessly volunteer your services during your stay. Our streets, shops and restaurants will certainly seem much quieter in the months to come.

Resort offices will revert back to Summer hours, shuffleboard courts and billiard halls will see very little action, cards will stay packed away in their cupboards and potluck dinners will have but a fraction of the variety that we experience while you are here.

The beaches on South Padre Island beckon us as the water temperatures rise.

Spring and Summer certainly are a wonderful time of the year here in the Valley. Sure the thermometers will reach into the 90s and stay there, but we always enjoy a cool breeze blowing in from the Gulf. And, the Good Lord did give us the brains to stay in the air conditioning when necessary!

So as you travel we wish you safety and Godspeed and we look forward to seeing you again soon!

What Will You Be Doing For FUN Next Winter?



**Come On Back To The MAGIC VALLEY
and
Bring A Few Of Your Friends As Well!**