

EL ESPEJO

M A G A Z I N E

FALL 2022
ELESPEJOMAG.ORG



THE STUDENT-RUN MAGAZINE AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-SAN ANTONIO

TABLE OF CONTENTS



34

LIVES ROBBED

Co-Editor-in-Chief Miranda Rodriguez and Staff Writer Sarah Cervera cover what happened in Uvalde, Texas and how the events have changed the community.



44

TEXAS VS WOMEN

Co-Editors-in-Chief Miranda Rodriguez and Serenity Hernandez Bogert highlight the ongoing issues surrounding abortion.



46

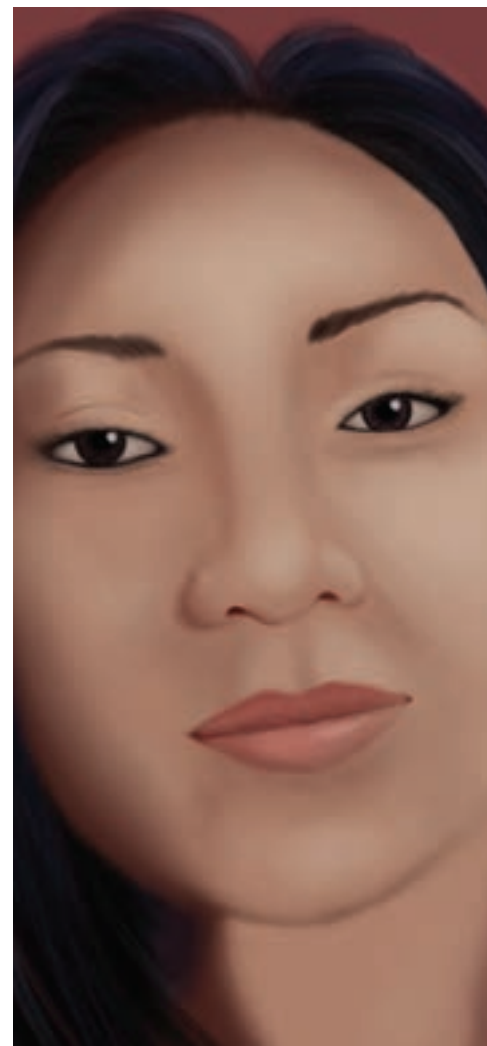
POLITICAL OPINIONS

The El Espejo staff share insights on the state of affairs surrounding politics.

7

ARTS AND CULTURE

From local hot spots to voices that are larger-than-life, we look at some of what sparks creativity within our society.



FOOD

29

We explore some of our favorite eats in the city.

LIFE AND SOCIETY

51

We dive into issues from immigration to mental health to help start conversations to influence change.



Photo: Miranda Rodriguez

COVER

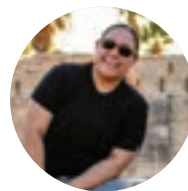
The cover of the issue was photographed to illustrate a story written by Miranda Rodriguez & Sarah Cervera.

CONTRIBUTORS

AUGUSTINE CALDERA IV

ANA JURADO PEDROZA

The views expressed in El Espejo magazine do not necessarily represent the views of Texas A&M-San Antonio nor its employees.



FROM TOP TO BOTTOM:

Serenity Hernandez Bogert and Miranda Rodriguez

ELESPEJO

M A G A Z I N E

FALL 2022/ ELESPEJOMAG.ORG

CO-EDITOR/COPY

SERENITY HERNANDEZ BOGERT

CO-EDITOR/VISUALS/DESIGN

MIRANDA RODRIGUEZ

SOCIAL MEDIA/WRITER

THALIA GUZMAN

DESIGN/WRITER

SARAH CERVERA

WRITER

MATT CUEVAS

WRITER

ELIZABETH LOPEZ

WRITER

DYLAN VILLALON

DIRECTOR OF STUDENT MEDIA

JENNY MOORE

ADVISER

DONNA PAZDERA

DESIGN CONSULTANT

RICHARD FISHER





STAFF

LEFT ROW FROM TOP TO BOTTOM:

Matt Cuevas, Thalia Guzman, Elizabeth Lopez and Miranda Rodriguez

RIGHT ROW FROM TOP TO BOTTOM:

Serenity Hernandez Bogert, Dylan Villalon and Sarah Cervera

FROM THE EDITORS



HANK YOU FOR PICKING UP THIS ISSUE!

Our staff and volunteers work hard each semester to tell real and important stories, and this issue is no different. We often touch on some difficult and heavy topics, but these stories need to be acknowledged and told.

The authentic, positive feedback from readers of our last issue has filled our hearts with intense gratitude. We are immeasurably thankful for all the kind words, as well as the awards we have received from the Associated Collegiate Press and the College Media Association.

We would like to extend our thanks to those who have ever picked up an issue of the magazine, and to those who continue to support us – we couldn't do it without y'all.

We hope you find what we have put together here informative and interesting. From crucial, immediate topics to a bit of light-hearted fun, we got you covered.

If you would like to hear more about what goes into making El Espejo happen, as well as listen to discussions about everything from local and national news to interviews, film reviews and more, listen to our podcast "Mirror Mirror" – now available on all podcast-streaming platforms.

Thank you,
Miranda & Serenity

Mirror Mirror:





“Home”

Elizabeth Lopez

Lookout Road, the moment when nature and machines meet. Taken on the Northeast side of San Antonio.



Culture

From local hot spots to voices that are larger-than-life, we look at some of what sparks creativity within our society.

*

HEY BABY, QUE PASO?

12

His long, experienced fingers fluttered over an old and dusty table, which acted as an imaginary piano.

*

SCHLATTERHOUSE RULES

24

It's fairly unusual that someone casually drops the cancer bomb in the middle of a conversation about drummers midway on a trip to the Alamo.



ON-AIR WITH DONNIE MEALS

BY SERENITY HERNANDEZ BOGERT



IN 2022, SAN ANTONIO CELEBRATED 100 YEARS OF RADIO IN THE CITY.

Earlier this year, the San Antonio Radio Hall of Fame inducted Donnie Meals, a long-time local radio host who developed the popularity of heavy metal in San Antonio in the late 1970s and '80s alongside fellow legends Lou Roney and DJ Joe Anthony. In honor of radio and Meals' induction, he and I had a brief chat:

Q: I READ YOU GOT INTO THE RADIO BUSINESS WHEN YOU WERE 18.

A: I was 17, actually. My sister knew Lou Roney because he happened to be at a get-together she was going to. She took me up to the station so I could meet him. Turns out, he didn't remember her at all. So, we used that opportunity to say, "Hey, remember I told you about my brother? He's really talented!" And that's how I got a job at KISS FM and KMAC AM.

Q: YOU WERE PART OF THE ORIGINAL '70S CREW WITH LOU RONEY AND JOE ANTHONY. IT'S FASCINATING WHAT Y'ALL WERE ABLE TO DO FOR HARD ROCK AND HEAVY METAL HERE IN SAN ANTONIO.

A: We were able to do that because we were locally owned. It wasn't like it is now, where a few companies own all the radio stations. We loved heavy metal and so did our audience, and it just stuck here - it was amazing to watch that happen, as well as be a part of that phenomenon.

Q: SOME FOLKS SAY SAN ANTONIO SHOULD TRY TO BE MORE LIKE AUSTIN, AND OTHERS ARGUE THAT WE'LL NEVER BE LIKE AUSTIN (IN A GOOD WAY.) WHAT IS SAN ANTONIO'S CURRENT PLACE IN THE LARGER TEXAS MUSIC ECOSYSTEM?

A: I think, for the most part, we're all in the same boat. We suffer from the same issues as all the other Texas cities: Livenation and Ticketmaster run everything. [Back in the late '70s], at Randy's Rodeo (now Randy's Bingo & Ballroom), we used to bring our own shows and put them on. We brought in bands like Rush. That's actually also where I saw The Sex Pistols on one of their few U.S. tour dates!

But anyway, now there are more avenues for stuff, which is ultimately good. At the college radio station KSYM, where I am now the General Manager and Faculty Advisor, we try to bring the power of choice and personality back into the local music scene and ecosystem.

Q: IN YOUR INTERVIEW WITH EXPRESS-NEWS EARLIER THIS YEAR, YOU SAID: "THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE RADIO STATION AND ITS LISTENERS - THAT'S WHAT'S GOING TO BRING [RADIO] BACK." WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE FUTURE OF RADIO?

A: Honestly, radio sucks right now. I have hope that the government will break up the monopolies of ownership, but I don't think that will happen. I program the mid-days on KSYM and play a lot of foreign music from other countries as well as local music. I just play good music. In my classes [at San Antonio College], I teach the students the technical side of things, but also how to be a good communicator. The mid-day programming and the student DJs include background stories about the artists and other news and information that's relative but unique from the other choices out there.

[Commercial] radio has to do something. It needs to ultimately reinvent itself and give itself purpose. That starts with the people.



SAN ANTONIO
RADIO HALL OF
FAME INDUCTEE
DONNIE MEALS

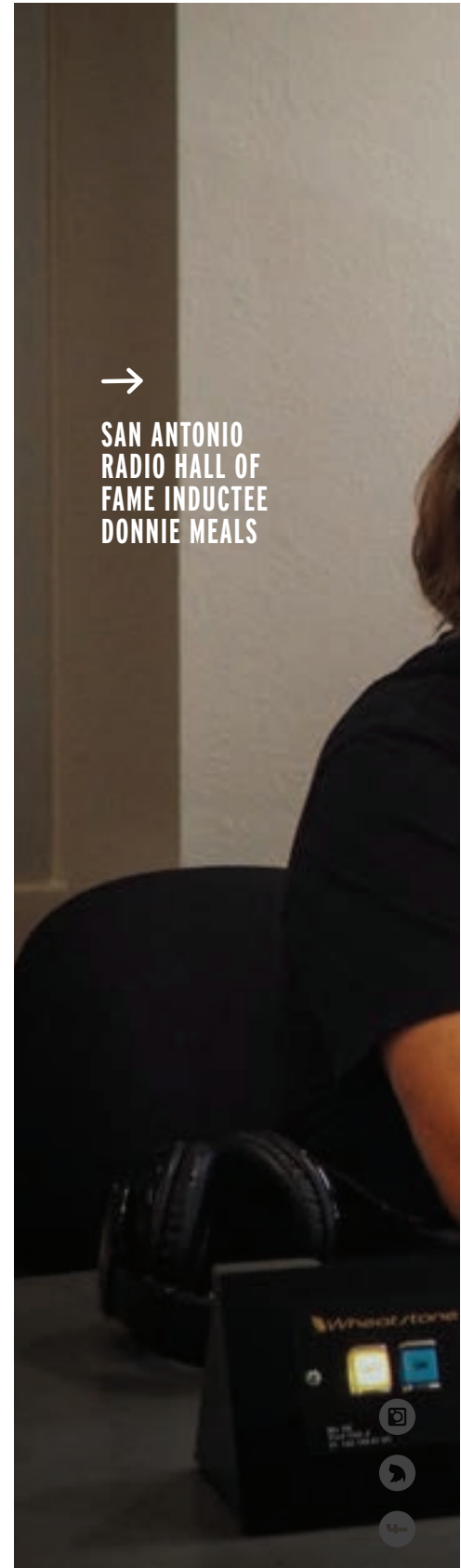




Photo: Serenity Hernandez Bogert



Photo Courtesy of Roman Perez

SAN ANTONIO SOL MAN

BY DYLAN VILLALON



EVERYONE WANTS TO BE A PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER THAN THEMSELVES.

We all want to contribute to a goal that we think is righteous, or to be committed to a cause that we feel is greater than us. Easy enough, right?

Wrong.

Despite technology and social media allowing us to instantly connect to nearly anyone around the globe, it seems that the younger generation is finding it harder than ever to simply come together.

Now, I could spend the next page and a half boring you to death with the historical and political context for this civic dilemma that we find ourselves in, but we both know that you did not pick up this magazine for a history lesson. Instead, allow me

to tell you a story. A story about a boy named Roman.

Over the summer 2022, I spent many afternoons in any community space that I could get into. At that time, I was working for a non-profit that registers voters, with a focus on young people and students. I was in coffee shops, bars, missions and museums, and even a couple of concerts. Toward the beginning of the summer, while scrolling through my Instagram feed, I found a post about a local market taking place on the first Friday of June.

I made my way to the market in Southtown that weekend, and I was eager to ask whoever the organizer of the event was to let me do some good ol' voter registration at the next event. That is where I first met Roman Sol Perez.

At first, I was pleasantly confused when he introduced himself as the organizer of the event. In my experience, it's not often that someone as young as Perez organizes a market, let alone a successful one.

There was live music, drinks and an incredible food truck. Most of all, everyone was kind and helpful. It was the truest sense of community that I had felt in a long time. The more I spoke with Perez, the more things began to make sense.

He was kind toward my ask about voter registration and there was an obvious passion and authenticity to him that was infectious.

Over the next few months, I worked a couple of his First Friday events, and we kept in touch through Instagram. During this time, I could not help but notice that his social media presence and his market events were growing. Fast. In essence, he was doing what I had spent the last year and a half of my life trying to do through voter registration: He was empowering his community.

One simple question loomed over me: How? Here was this young man - no more formally educated or experienced than most people his age - doing what elected officials with decades of experience, more often than not, fail to do: building power and resources for his community.

To find out the "how," I went back to Sol's First Friday market this fall to talk to his vendors, the folks who were benefiting the most from these markets. I wanted to hear from them first to find out why they choose to conduct their business in this market in particular, which often serves as their primary source of income.

It was a Friday evening, calm and cloudless. On the horizon was one of those blood-orange Texas sunrises that we all may take for granted, but it set a welcoming mood for the night. This wasn't just any Friday. It was the first Friday of the month, and in Southtown, that means it's Pop-up Market night.

As I drive to Perez's Market, the cramped streets of one of San Antonio's





Photo Courtesy of Roman Perez

most historic areas came alive with customers, tents, tables and canvases. As early as 1994, the Southtown community has recognized the First Friday of every month as a celebration of art and culture, and has since become an opportunity for local artists and vendors to sell their merchandise to their friends and peers. But like many other industries, the pandemic brought things to a near complete halt. Dallas Sanchez, a vendor at the market who was emphatically draping a canvas with a beautiful variety of colors spoke to me about the effects of COVID-19.

“Coming out of the pandy (pandemic), it’s been really fantastic having more space and a place to show art... it’s really nice getting back out into the community. It’s critical because, to me, this is the culture,” he said.

Sanchez was not the only vendor I spoke to while enjoying a beer and a fajita plate. I also spoke with Donna “Dee” Longoria, who has

been coming to pop-up markets to sell her merchandise for two years.

“I think we ended up following each other on Instagram, he reached out to me and I came out... I saw the potential that it had and the life that Roman was bringing back into it, and I have been coming back ever since,” she said.

When speaking with Longoria, she seemed more than happy, almost eager and excited, to brag about the market and Perez. This caught my attention; I expected vendors to want to put on a good interview for the market that they were participating in, but this felt different. How are Sol Tree Productions’ markets different from the rest?

“What I like about it is that I can see the passion behind what [Perez] does. He loves it. He takes care of it. I see the work that he puts in behind it. I like that he is not looking

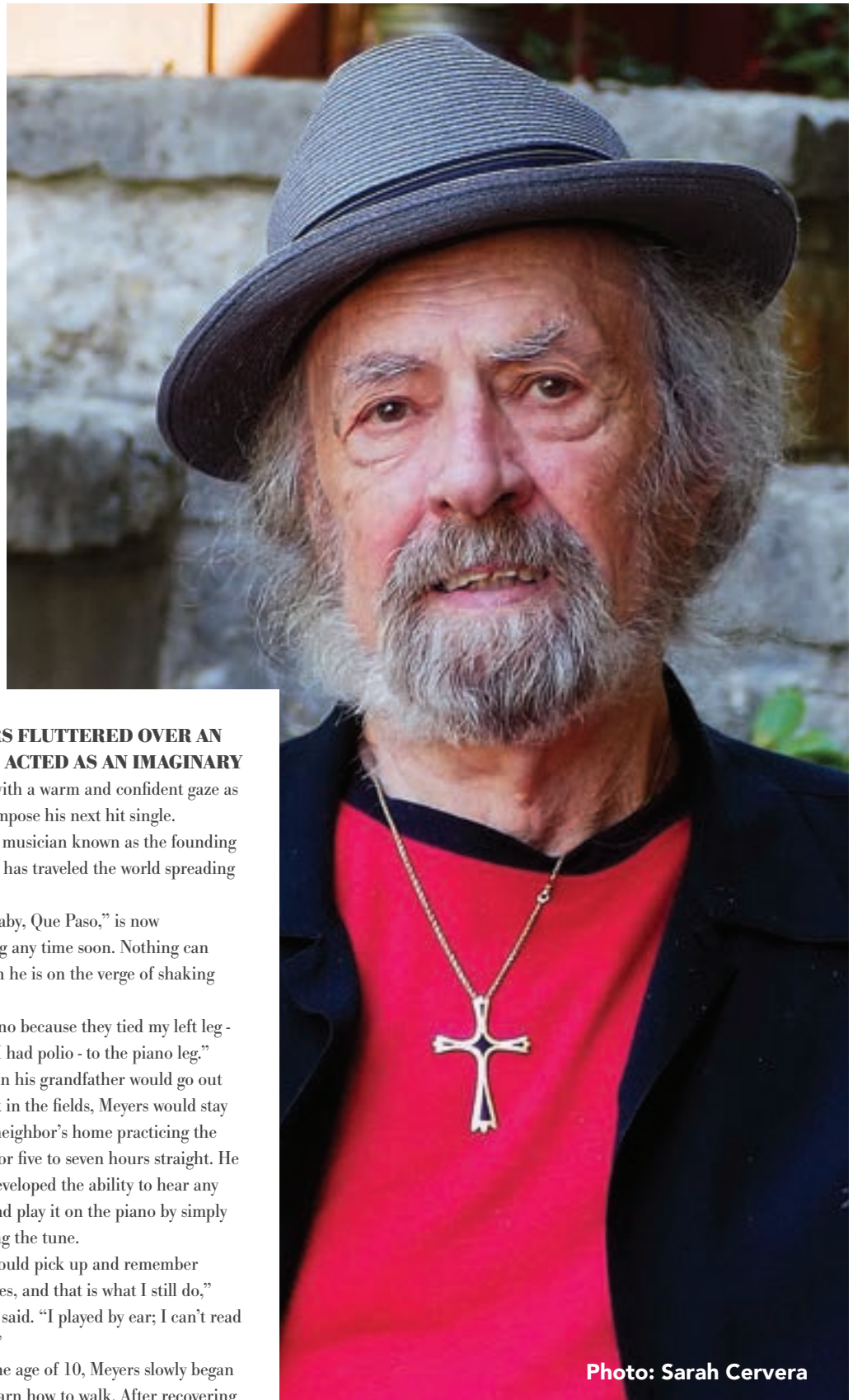
to make money off of it just because it’s ‘First Friday.’ He’s looking out for everybody in the community. There’s a lot of space for everybody to eat here, and he’s making more,” said Longoria.

Finally, I asked Longoria why it is so important for markets and spaces like this to exist consistently in San Antonio.

“Community and support. Everyone’s trying to make it right now. There’s a lot more positive vibes out here. When people think about Texas, they think about Dallas or Houston or Austin, but why not here? San Antonio is really about community, we want to bring more to that. San Antonio is way more than just the Alamo.”

HEY BABY, QUE PASO?

BY SARAH CERVERA



IS LONG, EXPERIENCED FINGERS FLUTTERED OVER AN OLD AND DUSTY TABLE, WHICH ACTED AS AN IMAGINARY PIANO. He stared off into the distance with a warm and confident gaze as if at that very moment he was about to compose his next hit single.

Augie Meyers, a San Antonio native and award-winning musician known as the founding father of the Sir Douglas Quintet and the Texas Tornados, has traveled the world spreading Texas culture and conjunto music.

The 82-year-old, who is best known for his song “Hey Baby, Que Paso,” is now performing as a solo artist, and he has no plans of stopping any time soon. Nothing can keep Meyers away from playing for his fans - not even when he is on the verge of shaking

hands with death.

“Heaven isn’t ready for me yet, and Hell is afraid I will take over,” Meyers said.

Meyers is no stranger to health scares. Before the age of 7, he underwent 10 major surgeries for his ear. One surgery left his head confined to a brace for seven months. However, he never would have discovered his interest in music or learned to play the piano had he not been diagnosed at the age of 2 with polio.

“My grandpa would take me to this man down the road, and he had a piano in his house,” Meyers said. “I picked up

the piano because they tied my left leg - where I had polio - to the piano leg.”

When his grandfather would go out to work in the fields, Meyers would stay in his neighbor’s home practicing the piano for five to seven hours straight. He soon developed the ability to hear any song and play it on the piano by simply recalling the tune.

“I would pick up and remember the notes, and that is what I still do,” Meyers said. “I played by ear; I can’t read music.”

At the age of 10, Meyers slowly began to re-learn how to walk. After recovering

Photo: Sarah Cervera



from polio, 15-year-old Meyers started his first band called “Augie Meyers and the Hot Tamale Playboys.”

“I was always playing the high school dances back in the day,” Meyers said. “If they had birthday parties, and if they had a piano in the house, I would play for the people.”

Several years later, Meyers went on to play his first show at the Freeman Coliseum with his childhood friend Doug Sahm. The two met at a grocery store Meyers’ mother owned when they were only 12.

“We opened for the Dave Clark Five, but they were going to cancel because their organ was broke,” Meyers said. “I had the first Vox organ in America bought from England, and that is what they needed, so they went ahead with the show.”

Producers soon began to notice Meyers’ ability to play the Vox organ, which led Huey Meaux to suggest Meyers and Sahm start an ‘English-sounding’ band.

“We called it the Sir Douglas Quintet, and we had a song called ‘She is About a Mover,’” Meyers said. “We became the first long-haired band to go to Europe with a hit record.”

With the Sir Douglas Quintet, Meyers crafted many chart-topping radio hits. It wasn’t until Warner Bros. Records called Meyers and Sahm that the band would shift from the genre of English rock to country, conjunto and Tex-Mex-style melodies.

“Doug called me and said that Warner Brothers wants us to start a supergroup and record an album,” Meyers said. “I have known Freddy Fender since I was 15, and met Flaco [Jimenez] in the ‘70s. So together we started a group called ‘The Texas Tornados.’”

The Texas Tornados won several awards, including a Grammy in 1991. According to the Academy, the Texas Tornados won an award for best Mexican-American performance with their song “Soy De San Luis” at the 33rd Annual Grammy Awards.

The year 1991 was not only a professional win for Meyers, but his personal life also flourished. That year, he also met his future wife, then Sara Ramirez, in an attempt to recruit a guitar player at Main Street Bar in San Antonio.

“When I walked into the bar, the first thing I noticed was that Augie was sitting at my brother’s little table,” Ramirez-Meyers said. “He asked me if he could buy me a drink, and I thought that is the least he can do since he was sitting at the table in my spot.”

The two began dating for five years, and they have been going strong as a married couple for 26 years. Ramirez-Meyers has always supported her husband through the good and the bad in their lives.

“Sara is my rock,” Meyers said.

In 2012, when Meyers was diagnosed with yet another health battle, kidney failure, Ramirez-Meyers never left his side.

“We traveled with the dialysis machine, or we would do it manually with the bag,” Ramirez-Meyers said. “If he was on the machine, it would be plugged in for nine hours every night on the road.”

Meyers’ health condition had deteriorated significantly during the 12 months that he was on dialysis, while doctors suggested Meyers would not pull through.

“I remember him in the hospital,” Ramirez-Meyers said. “[The doctor] came in and said he was surprised Augie was still alive; he thought Augie was not going to make it.”

Fans have always been at the forefront of Meyers’ life, and he refused to stop playing for them during his kidney failure health crisis.

“Augie’s fans are his number one priority. He knows his music makes his fans happy,” Ramirez-Meyers said. “He will always play for his fans until the day he dies.”

Meyers fully recovered when he received a kidney from a donor in Dallas, Texas. With the help of his wife and manager, Una McGinnis, Meyers continues to tour Texas and the United States.

“He has had a rough life,” McGinnis said. “He had a real scare at one point in his life with diverticulitis and then he got the kidney problem, and [the donor] who knew nothing about him saved his life.”

Meyers’ death-defying perseverance and passion for music did not go unnoticed. In 2020, at the Lifetime Achievement for Augie Meyers award ceremony, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott awarded Meyers a lifetime achievement award for all his musical accomplishments.

Many believe there is nothing that life can throw at Meyers that he can’t find a way to overcome.

“He is a survivor,” McGinnis said. “He has traveled the world and people just absolutely love him; he is resilient.”

Meyers plans to continue playing music until God tells him to stop.

“I am blessed,” Meyers said. “I have never got burned out because I say, ‘If God gave you something to do, do it.’”



Photo Courtesy: Sara Ramirez-Meyers



TECH PORT SA:

THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN
LIVE ENTERTAINMENT AND
GAMING

BY DYLAN VILLALON





Photo: Albert Villasana



COOT OVER, AT&T CENTER.

Step aside, Alamodome. There's a new live music and event venue in town, and it's got video games. Let's talk about TechPort San Antonio.

Before we get into what TechPort SA is, hop on the magic school bus with me for a short history lesson about where it's located (and call me Ms. Frizzle).

On the Southwest side of San Antonio lies a relic of the American military. This relic takes the form of a 4,017-acre plot of land that was originally known as the South San Antonio Aviation Camp. During World War I, this camp served as a school for pilots, engineers, mechanics, aviation officers and also served as a general depot for the military. The camp opened in March 1917, and in June was named Camp Kelly (and then Kelly Field) after a man who had crashed a plane some years before at nearby Fort Sam Houston. Fast forward to 1995, after 84 years of service, the Base Realignment and Closure Commission announced the closure of Kelly Field for good. That same year, the city of San Antonio named the field the Greater Kelly Development Authority, which was later renamed Tech Port SA in 2005.

OK, class dismissed - sort of. You see, it's hard to talk about Tech Port SA without talking about the impact it has had on the community around it. This became apparent when the federal government announced its closure in 1997.

"Typically when you retire infrastructure of this size, you don't want to lose the jobs. There are a lot of civilians that work on the base. So, typically you will see earnest and honest investment from local governments to create an authority who is tasked with finding some way to keep those jobs," said Sam Elizondo, Director of Esports and LAN Gaming at Tech Port Arena. I spoke with Elizondo about the significance of Tech Port SA.

"The campus could be turned into a shipping place or a manufacturing place, but you can see that the [city of San Antonio has] taken a different approach here. They began to leverage the resources that they had and started inviting robotics, engineering and cyber security firms to cultivate a technology campus down here."

Over the next decade and a half, cultivation is exactly what Tech Port SA did. With cybersecurity quickly making its way to the frontlines of international relations, San Antonio's reputation as "Military City, USA" quickly began to shift to "Cyber

City, USA". This exponential growth paved the way for Tech Port SA to begin development of a state of the art facility that is not only a physical manifestation of live entertainment in its finest form, but also a technological marvel in more ways than one.

So, that brings us back to the present day. In 2022, Tech Port Arena + Center officially opened its doors to the Alamo City. You might be wondering what makes this arena so special. I asked Elizondo the same thing.

"We have a multi-use, 3,500-seat arena that was built from the ground up with technology in mind. One great example would be that Tech Port Arena uses two 10-gigabit Internet tubes coming into this facility. For comparison, the Arlington Esports Arena runs off of a total of four gigabits. They have really made this place future-proof so that we can do all sorts of things. We have our own chef staff and restaurant and e-gaming facilities. Our only constraint is the size of the arena itself," said Elizondo.

At maximum capacity, TechPort SA holds 3,500 people. It is smaller than most places, but that is not necessarily a bad thing.

"Big-name artists who usually have to plan around larger events can basically just stop here in San Antonio for a small show. That is how we have been able to get artists such as Smashing Pumpkins, Kevin Gates and Modest Mouse," said Elizondo.

At the beginning of this story, I mentioned that Tech Port SA also has video games. And oh boy, they sure do. (Full disclosure, I am a lifelong gamer and intend to stay that way throughout my life, so forgive me if I seem particularly excited in these next few paragraphs.)

We talked about the cyber boom that has taken place over the past 15 years in the United States. Well, what if I told you that there was another equally large and similarly expanding industry that took over the globe in the same span of time as cybersecurity? That's right, I'm talking about esports. In addition to hosting musical artists and live shows, Tech Port Arena is also top-of-the-line when it comes to hosting esports tournaments and broadcasting them around the world. That's not all.

Tech Port SA also houses the only LAN gaming center in South San Antonio which allows members of the community to pay \$10 for the whole day and use any \$5,000 gaming setups that it has to offer.

You might be wondering: Why gaming? Well there's two reasons: the first - and most obvious - is the money. In 2021, the video game industry banked \$190 billion



Photo: Albert Villasana

in revenue, which is more than the music and film industries combined. Although Tech Port SA is a relatively smaller venue, the potential to dip into the largest sector of the entertainment industry in the world is certainly present.

The second and arguably more important reason is the impact on the previously mentioned community that Tech Port SA is unavoidably tied to. Tech Port SA finds itself at a unique intersection of two of the fastest-growing sectors in the history of commerce and entertainment, both of which are considered by experts to become the future of overall entertainment and global interaction. This places an opportunity into the lap of San Antonio to become a hub for both cultural and systemic progress.

Tech Port SA is more than just a place to catch a show or run an Overwatch tournament. “[Tech Port SA] acts as a calling card. The people on this side of town, and in San Antonio as a whole, don’t realize that they are just as qualified for a career in cybersecurity or robotics, simply because they don’t have access to it,” Elizondo said.

“This whole building is a non-profit. After the U.S. breaks even, every dollar goes to the Kelly Heritage Foundation, which is owned and operated by Tech Port SA and funds many things including the San Antonio Museum of Science and Technology.”

An emerging priority for cities across the United States is the intent to create easier access for folks - of all ages and career

backgrounds - who are interested in the cyber sector or in gaming, or any profession for that matter. The need to create jobs in regions that are traditionally underinvested in like Southwest San Antonio is also becoming more viable. Tech Port SA employs just under 15,000 people with more than 80 different employers, including Lockheed Martin and Boeing.

A product of bridging the gap between the San Antonio community and potential careers exists right here at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Back in 2020, while the university was exploring the idea of becoming the first collegiate esports team in San Antonio, Elizondo was brought on as a consultant of sorts in coordination with then-head esports



Photo: Albert Villasana



Coach, Travis Yang Elizondo, owner of LFG Cyber Cafe here in San Antonio at the time, was interested in bringing the younger high school and college-level gamer demographic into the fold. I asked Elizondo why it was so important to bring gaming to college students in this way.

“I was never a traditional academic, and to a great extent, the education system didn’t speak to me. None of the things that I was interested in were regarded as ‘relevant.’ Maybe I am spurred by spite, but I doubled down on the idea that I am not the only one [who feels this way.]. I dedicated myself to providing space, as well as encouraging and educating others. You may not ever be in the top 0.01% that gets on the biggest stage, but if gaming is something that you’re interested in, let’s figure out why. Whether it’s story, design, coding, modeling, music - what is it about games that you’re interested in and let’s see if we can make that a career for you. That’s why I did it. There was nobody going to bat for me. And now, I can be a difference,” said Elizondo.

Tech Port SA is more than just a place to go when you want to catch a good show or grind your favorite online game. It represents clear and transparent investment in the community, not just the southwest side of San Antonio, but across the city. Multi-use, accessible spaces and resources such as the facilities and opportunities being shared at Tech Port SA are essential to community building and cohesion.

In essence, Tech Ports SA is serving the San Antonio community in the same way that student organizations here on the A&M-SA campus serve students, albeit on a larger scale. The point is to give students and community members a better experience in getting started in our careers or hobbies than those who tried before. To update the culture.

My final question is for you, the reader. Is there something that you would like to do, but don’t because you feel like you don’t have access to the same resources as others?

If the answer is yes, then you are not alone.

VICE GRIP ON JOURNALISM

A CONVERSATION WITH GIANNA TOBONI

BY MATT CUEVAS

Photo Courtesy of Gianna Toboni



GIANNA TOBONI IS A BADASS. Throughout her extensive career as a journalist, she's gone deep

into cartel territory in order to uncover political corruption in Mexico; stood on the frontlines with Isis fighters; pursued Nigerian pirates on their illegal oil refineries; and has even been chased out of a town in Wajid Somalia by an Al-Qaeda affiliate. She is, simply put, one of the best currently doing it. But don't just take my word for it.

Toboni, who is currently a senior correspondent as well as producer for Vice News, has numerous accolades to her resume. They include being named to Forbes' 30 under 30 list for media in 2015 as well as being a Peabody award finalist. She is a rock star in journalism, and took the time fresh off a plane

from Houston to speak with me for an unfiltered deep dive into everything from Bollywood to Velvet Taco, how she got where she is, and what she's up to next.

Q: THE OTHER DAY I READ SOMETHING THAT SAID MOST OF GEN Z IS GETTING THEIR NEWS FROM TIKTOK, WHICH I FIND SCARY. WHY DO YOU FEEL LIKE A RELIABLE NEWS SOURCE IS SO IMPORTANT, ESPECIALLY TODAY?

A: You know, I think that's a really interesting question because when I first got into journalism, I graduated from college in 2010, and news was slowly starting to transition to only doing these quick sort of sound bite pieces or click bait. Thinking that it was going to do better with young people, and I totally agree that TikTok is taking off, but I think that also doesn't mean that people just want shorter

content. I think that if done the right way, people do like a longer form of content. And I, like you, think it's super important because you want people to have a solid comprehensive understanding of issues. That's really one of the foundations of our democracy: understanding issues and policies that you're hopefully voting on.

The other thing about TikTok though - and I know you're not specifically asking about that - is I think that people have just gotten really creative with how they're presenting information. So maybe part of it is that people just like to consume quickly, but I think part of it too is just that people want to be entertained in a different, more creative way. And that's why I think it's important that journalism and long form journalism continue to evolve, so that



we're making sure that we still are getting young people watching, listening, and reading these stories.

Q: PIGGYBACKING OFF OF THAT, WHY DO YOU FEEL LIKE BEING ABLE TO TELL STORIES IN LONGER FORM, IN ACTUAL MINUTES VERSUS SECONDS AT VICE IS SO IMPORTANT AND RESONATES SO WELL?

A: So you know we're constantly reaching out to people asking them if they want to do an interview, and in some cases there are other media outlets who are also reaching out to those people. And what I typically say is: "We have the luxury of time, you will be able to tell your story in a more comprehensive way with us."

I think that is true. We're not doing two-minute pieces where people get cut off basically right when they start talking. We really value allowing people on all sides of the debate to have time to not only make their point, but to show viewers who they are. You know I think that's a big part of this: giving people time in their own natural environment to be themselves so that their story can resonate with viewers. I think there is no better way to educate people than for them to at least try to be able to relate to the people that we are interviewing.

Q: WHEN DID YOU KNOW WITHOUT A DOUBT THAT JOURNALISM IS WHAT YOU WANTED TO DO?

A: I'm just pausing because that is a really hard question... From the time that I was a child, I always watched Lisa Ling and Diane Sawyer, and I think that I wasn't a traditional learner in the classroom. So I really valued platforms where I felt like I was learning about something, and it worked for me. And so, especially with Lisa Ling when I was younger and watching her on TV, I just thought, "What a cool way to help people learn about the world." So I would say in those years that's when that sort of like foundation was being built.

But I had an experience when I was working for one of the networks where I think I was an intern or maybe an [assistant producer] and I got to go out on a shoot which was a big deal, and one of the big network correspondents was interviewing a mom. And it was a mom who had



Photo Courtesy of Gianna Toboni

dealt with really a lot of trauma; it's a really sad story, but her daughter was sexually assaulted on campus, went to the school for support, the school basically blew her off and the daughter ended up committing suicide.

And so the correspondent was interviewing the mom, and I can remember just sitting off camera thinking, "I wish that I could be the person talking to this mom right now." I just felt like there needed to be I don't know, like more compassion? I think I just felt really uncomfortable in that moment, and what that energy transitioned

into was just kind of motivation. That was a big moment for me I think when I realized that not only did I want to stay in journalism, but I wanted to transition into that role.

Q: IS THERE A STORY OUT THERE THAT YOU REALLY WANT TO TELL THAT YOU HAVEN'T GOTTEN TO YET?

A: Yes...(laughing)

Q: IS THAT SOMETHING YOU CAN TALK ABOUT OR GO INTO OR NO?

A: There are a few. Maybe I'll just tell you this one because I think it'll air by the time



Photo Courtesy of Gianna Toboni

you publish.

There's something that's unprecedented happening in our country right now which is families being forced out of their states because their children's healthcare and the safety of their families are at risk. And what I'm talking about is what's happening to families with transgender kids, whom, in many states right now, are no longer safe. In Texas specifically, the Attorney General and the Governor are threatening to investigate families, and even currently investigating families through child protective services, and are basically threatening to remove children and put them foster care.

And so families with not much financial stability, in some cases single-parent households

are being forced to do whatever they can to keep their families safe. In some cases that means fleeing their states. So, typically, when we hear the word "refugee," we think of families having to flee war-torn countries, risking their life to cross the Mediterranean Sea, then land in Europe. But we don't often think of American refugees, and I've been meeting with a lot of these families and that's how they are describing themselves. And they are making comparisons to historical conflicts, which give you the chills when you hear the parallels.

So that's a story that I've been telling over the years, but I think right now we have reached a breaking point. So we've decided to talk to several families in different states and go deep on their stories, and weave them together for an

episode of our show. We're going to hopefully be airing that in mid November.

Q: HAVE YOU EVER BEEN AFRAID OR FELT IN DANGER WHILE OUT ON ASSIGNMENT?

A: Yes, many times. (Laughs.) I think that there are some people out there who would say that they're not scared, or that they don't fear for their life or safety, and I'm not one of those people. I do feel a lot of fear and I feel scared when I'm in certain positions. When I was interviewing Isis, and knee-to-knee with two Isis fighters, I was scared. When I was on the frontlines and you could see the Isis flag and the buzzing of aircraft overhead, I was scared. When I interviewed Mexican cartel hit men, I was scared. When we were in Wajid Somalia





Photo Courtesy of Gianna Toboni

being chased out of a town by an Al-Shabaab an Al-Qaeda affiliate, I was scared. There have been a lot of times in my career where I've been really scared. And then, sometimes, you know you're in the US and hanging out with American militias and there are guys who don't know how to handle firearms, and they are swinging the barrels in all different directions and that scares me, too.

So I think it's important to feel that fear and recognize it and talk about it. Because there will always be members of your crew that don't have the confidence to say it out loud even if they are feeling it. And I think it's only until you recognize risk that you can really assess it and make a plan for how to be as safe as possible.

Q: LET'S SWITCH TO SOMETHING A LITTLE LIGHTER. WHAT'S MORE INTIMIDATING, SITTING DOWN WITH A CARTEL HIT MAN OR A MEMBER OF ISIS OR BEING A PARENT FOR THE FIRST TIME?

A: I would say the short answer is: I think being in cartel territory knowing what the risks are there is the highest-risk place I've ever been as a journalist. Because you can't just report something to the police and know that they're the police and not the bad guys. You also aren't surrounded by a military that can fight back, so Mexico definitely is one of my favorite countries in the world and it also I think is one of the most dangerous places I've worked.

I was really excited to become a parent, and I didn't feel a lot of fear around it. There are definitely parts of the job that are a lot harder than anything I've done at work, but the reward is also just so much higher than anything I've experienced. It is by far the most incredible journey of my life and the most favorite part of my life. I just can't say enough good things about being a parent. It is really truly the joy of my life.

Q: OKAY GIANNA GIVE ME YOUR COOLEST BAR STORY. I KNOW YOU HAVE TO HAVE SOME COOL STORIES WITH ALL THE TIME YOU SPEND ON THE ROAD.

A: One time, I had the luck of getting to shoot a story on Bollywood in India with three of my



Photo Courtesy of Gianna Toboni

best friends. We met this guy who made these very cool custom suits, so we each got one. They are the kind of suits that when you walk into a party wearing one, everybody turns their head; each had different, bright colors and patterns. A couple of nights later, we were having trouble getting into a Bollywood party at a fancy hotel bar, so we decided to throw on our ridiculous suits and try our luck. We walked up to the red carpet, pretended we were the stars of the party, and soon enough, the paparazzi started snapping shots. That's all it took! We walked right in and had a blast. You know, wherever we are in the world we usually try to go out, and I think it's a good way to understand a different part of the culture. I mean, assuming you're in a country where people drink or it's legal to drink.

Q: WHY DO YOU FEEL LIKE BEING OUT DRINKING AT A BAR IS A GREAT WAY TO BETTER UNDERSTAND A CULTURE?

A: I like to spend time after we shoot going to restaurants, or souks, or bars to get a feel for the culture. We learn a lot while shooting, but it's always interesting and enlightening to get a glimpse into how people socialize around the world. We've had a blast being out at bars in different countries and also different parts of this country. It's a great way to try to better understand a culture.

Q: WHAT DO YOU DO TO DECOMPRESS? WHEN YOU FINALLY GET HOME DO YOU HAVE ANY GUILTY PLEASURES? DO YOU BINGE WATCH ANYTHING?

A: I really just like hanging out with my kids. I'm the person that will take like a four hour red-eye, or a flight at 5 a.m. just so that I can get home quicker to my kids. I just have a blast with my kids, they are 1 and 2 years old right now and we go to the zoo, the academy of science, the beach, the park. I can do anything with them and there's something about seeing life through the lens of a child that is really a lot of fun. You know, there are just certain things that I would never do as an adult, but because they want to do it I'm like, "Sure, let's go do it!" Then I end up having a blast doing it. And it's mostly because I'm watching them having a blast doing it. So I



would say that's a big one, I like to work out a lot. I'll go on long runs and long bike rides. I need that for my sort of calmness, and, you know, it's meditative for me. It gets rid of all the anxiety and stress and I can go on an hour-long run and

feel good for the next few days. And then I love to cook, so I'd say that's the other thing.

Q: WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE THING TO COOK?

A: I like to replicate what I eat every time I'm

in Texas – Velvet Taco – but I haven't quite nailed it.



Photo Courtesy of Gianna Toboni

SCHLATTERHOUSE RULES:

A CANCER SURVIVOR'S GUIDE TO MAKING IT IN SHOW BUSINESS

BY MIRANDA RODRIGUEZ



**T'S FAIRLY UNUSUAL
THAT SOMEONE
CASUALLY DROPS
THE CANCER BOMB IN**

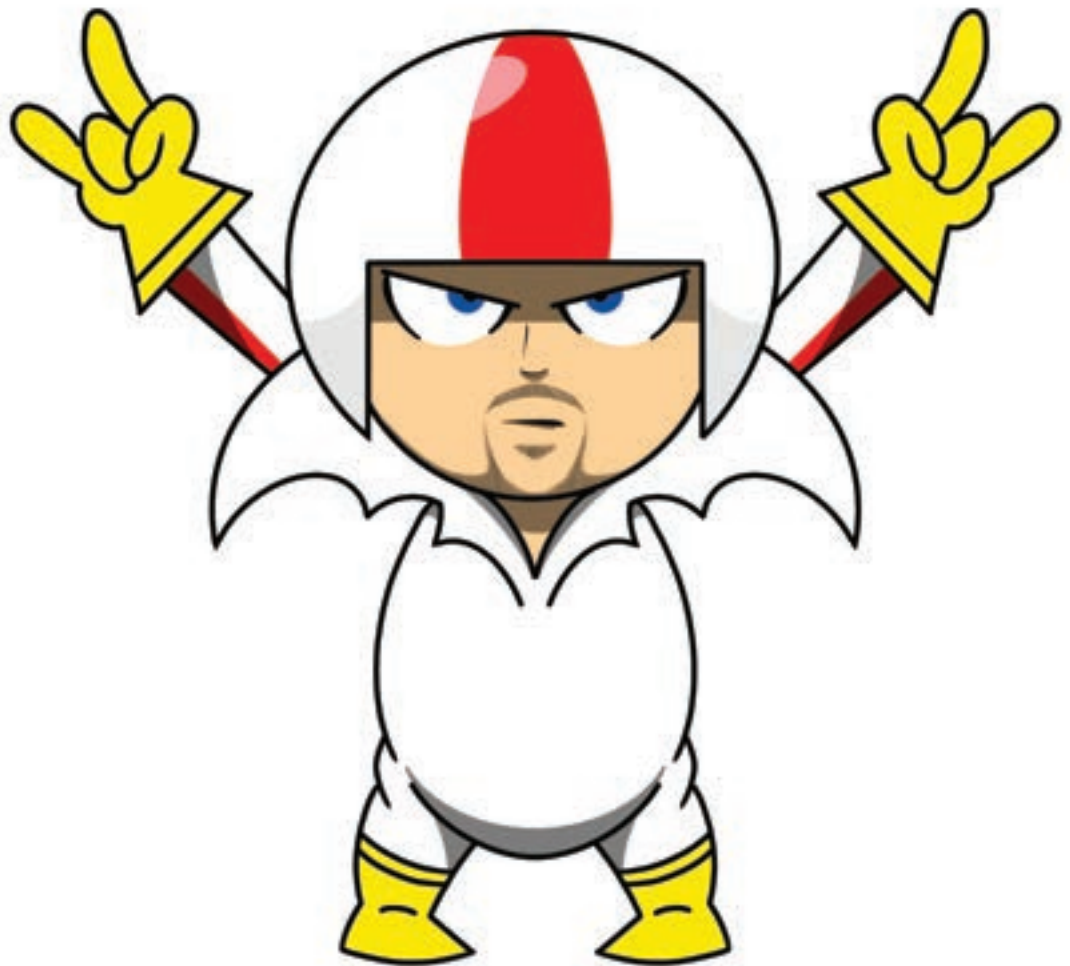
**THE MIDDLE OF A CONVERSATION
ABOUT DRUMMERS MIDWAY ON A
TRIP TO THE ALAMO.**

"I had 336,000 white blood cells. I was 97% infected with leukemic cells. I was in what's called a blast crisis, which basically means get your shit in order, you're gonna die," he said.

This isn't your typical conversation with a friend, let alone someone you met a few weeks prior. To say I was caught off guard was an understatement. At that moment, I just shrugged it off because I didn't want to pressure him into telling his story. I met Charlie Schlatter this summer at Superhero Car Show & Comic Con, a comic book convention, or con for short. After the con, my friends and I invited him to a night out in San Antonio.

Our evening consisted of alcoholic beverages, "E.T.", laughter and dancing (mostly him). That night, we had way too many drinks and enough social interaction with people that it was our time to wind down from an eventful weekend.

In those moments, he wasn't an actor, nor did he have any celebrity. He was just Charlie. Our "professional" interview wasn't until a few



“ I had 336,000 white blood cells. I was in what's called a blast crisis, which basically means get your shit in order; you're gonna die. ”





Photo Courtesy of Charlie Schlatter

↑
**CHARLIE
 SCHLATTER**

weeks later, that I learned more about Charlie Schlatter.

With an acting career spanning over 30 years, Schlatter, 56, has played everything from Dr. Jesse Travis on “Diagnosis: Murder” to the voice of Buzz, the Honey Nut Cheerio bee. Most notably, he is the voice of suburban daredevil himself, Kick Buttowski. Currently, he is the voice of Chad Applewhite in Nickelodeon’s “Big Nate” and will be voicing Sidecar in the upcoming Mattel “Hot Wheels: Ultimate

Racers” series.

Schlatter got into acting for the reason most guys do: to meet girls. He auditioned for the musical “Oliver” because a girl told him it would be cute if he was Oliver. For his audition, he sang “Yankee Doodle Dandy” and stole a chair from the stage. “I got the part of Oliver and kind of got the girl.”

All jokes aside, Schlatter continued acting because it was cathartic, and he fell in love with the social aspect of it. Around this time,



**FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:
AUTUMN HERNANDEZ,
NEF HERNANDEZ, CHARLIE
SCHLATTER & MIRANDA
RODRIGUEZ**

he lost his only sister. Acting allowed him the chance to express himself and meet people who were older than him.

As he continued acting through high school, he knew this was something he wanted to pursue as a career. He attended Ithaca College in upstate New York where he majored in musical theater. During his junior year, he was discovered while doing a play at the local theater.

“My first audition with an agent was something I landed that day: with Michael J. Fox, it was called ‘Bright Lights, Big City.’ It was serendipity. I was at the right place at the right time,” he said.

Schlatter then went on to work alongside some of the most iconic actors of all time. He starred opposite George Burns in “18 Again!” and opposite Dick Van Dyke in “Diagnosis: Murder.” (I highly recommend watching “18

Again!”, especially to those who are like my mom, who fangirled when she found out about Schlatter, and made me watch the film with her.)

“I don’t think I would’ve lasted as long as I have in this business had it not been for working with people who loved what they do and were always so positive about it,” he said.

Schlatter began accepting jobs as a voice-over artist because he was determined to be a present father during a time when theatrical productions were moving to Canada. Then came the cancer diagnosis, or as he playfully recalls: “I got the cancer.”

He was diagnosed in 2006 with Chronic Myeloid Leukemia, an incurable but treatable blood cancer. He takes a medication called Gleevec daily to manage it.

“I treat myself to medication every day that keeps me alive. I always compare it to birth control. If I keep taking it, I’m not going to get pregnant,” he says through a bursting laugh.

He didn’t experience any symptoms aside from being tired, but what 40-year-old with three young children isn’t tired? Concerned, he went to the doctor to get treatment for what he thought was a spider bite.

“I’m not a doctor. I played one on TV for 100 years,” he said, then whispered, “ But I’m not a doctor.”

The doctor took one look at the small bump, Schlatter recalls:

“Dude, that’s not a spider bite. That’s a clot. Although, he didn’t say dude because, he’s like, a real doctor. He took blood. On his machine, I had 50,000 white blood cells, which maxed out his machine. The average is like 8,000 or 9,000.”

In January 2007, Schlatter disclosed his cancer diagnosis with his theatrical agents. “Two days later I get the call, ‘Hey Charlie, we are thinning the herd and we aren’t renewing your contract.’ In the most liberal of industries, these guys just basically told me, ‘No thanks. Cancer, no thanks,’” he said.

Soon, however, his voice-over career began to take off. At one point, he was working on five different shows at once. Fast forward to the pandemic, when the whole world shut down - Schlatter became busier than ever and hasn’t stopped. He’s currently working on three different productions.

“All of a sudden, things were shutting down,





Photo: Autumn Hernandez

then boom! Voice-over stuff for me just cranked,” he said. “Just put this thing in front of me,” he gestures to the microphone. “And I’ll make a fart noise and you can pay me later. That’s really my existence these days.”

Earlier, I mentioned that I met Schlatter while working at a convention. For those who have never been to a con, it is basically a giant haven for geeks (I can say this because I am one). There are vendors, artists, cosplayers and, most importantly, celebrities. Fans attend these events yearning for the opportunity to meet like-minded individuals and potentially have an interaction with a celebrity.

To be completely honest, I wasn’t entirely thrilled about being put in charge of one of the celebrity areas. I’ve had some experiences with celebrities that haven’t always been great, but that’s a story for another time. But right off the bat, I knew I would like Schlatter.

When he introduced himself to me on the first day of the con, I knew he was going to be a cool dude. After working with him all weekend, I can truly say that in the 10 years I have been working cons, he is one of the most genuine people I have ever worked with. The amount of time and attention he invests in his fans is astounding and truly admirable.

Over the weekend, Schlatter spent most of his time conversing with and entertaining fans. Volunteer Autumn Hernandez spent time as his handler during the con and got the full Charlie Schlatter experience.

“My favorite thing was when a guy came up and requested him to put the dirtiest quote on one of his photos when he autographed it. Makes me want to have everyone do that,” said Hernandez.

“I’m really tired after a convention. You’re



**FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:
AUTUMN HERNANDEZ,
NEF HERNANDEZ, CHARLIE
SCHLATTER & MIRANDA
RODRIGUEZ**

so emotionally invested in people and you're on and kind of want to be the best you can be. If that means I'm going to sit there for 30 minutes and do a scene with someone, I'll do it. People just want to have a connection," he says.

One of the biggest draws of a con is the opportunity to take a professional photograph with a celebrity guest. I am guilty of this (especially the time I spent way too much money on a photo op with Ewan McGregor). These photo ops are often done quickly, and most fans barely have a chance to say anything to that person they spent so much time waiting to talk to.

To remedy this, Schlatter and his business partner Matt Gitkin have been working on a new project they are hoping to incorporate at cons in the future. His newest side project is called "V.O. To Go." With this experience, fans will get the opportunity to go into a recording booth with a voice actor and have professional audio and/or video recording session alongside that actor.

"We aim to create a human experience with fans. People want to connect with each other and this offers that," said Gitkin. "It takes the whole celebrity experience to a different level. You are in space and also in sound with these guys. It's just another dimension to it," Schlatter said.

From our first night out to this long Zoom interview, one thing I should mention about Charlie is that he is more than just some actor: He's a new friend. You may know him as the sexy Dr. Travis or Kick Buttowski, but to me, he is just Charlie - the guy who makes fart noises for a living.



Illustration:
Augustine Caldera IV



Food

We explore some of our favorite eats in the city.

↑
THE CORNHOLIO
Vicious Eats

*
CHEEKY CHIPPY

30

It's not every day you drive through the Southside and come across a food trailer emblazoned with a large Union Jack on the front. The trailer reads "Rosey's Fish and Chips."

*
FOOD'S NOT DEAD

32

Vicious Eats is a food truck with tasty food and a DIY punk rock attitude.



CHEEKY CHIPPY

ROSEY'S FISH AND CHIPS

BY MIRANDA RODRIGUEZ



T'S NOT EVERY DAY YOU DRIVE THROUGH THE SOUTHSIDE AND COME ACROSS A FOOD TRAILER

EMBLAZONED WITH A LARGE UNION JACK ON THE FRONT. The trailer reads "Rosey's Fish and Chips."

Matthew Rose - "Rosey" himself - serves up authentic English fish and chips all over the city. He primarily sets up outside local businesses on the South and East sides of town.

Rose is from Milton Keynes, a city 50 miles north of London.

"I've been [in San Antonio] 20 years. I still have a bit of an accent," he jokes.

Being English means his fish and chips are about as proper as it gets.

"I saw there was a gap in the market. I thought there was something that I could do better than what was being done here," he said.

"We used to go to Corpus Christi and Port Aransas for the day. We would always stop at Snoopy's Pier on the way back. To me, that was like being in heaven. It was the only place where the fish and chips tasted worth a damn. If you have to go 150 miles to get it, no one is going to do that - except me. I'm crazy enough to," Rose jokes.

"I didn't realize the extent, but people actually quite get their minds blown by this food."

Rose bought his first fryer in 2019. It was a small electric fryer he purchased when his wife was out of town. He started using it to fry up fish in his backyard and garage, sharing it with locals



Photo: Miranda Rodriguez





Photo: Miranda Rodriguez

↑
MATTHEW
ROSE

and people in his neighborhood.

“It was a primitive version of what I do now. What I do now is very corporate and sophisticated,” he said with a laugh.

After a few months of hustling out of his backyard, Rose was invited to work as a pop-up chef at The Dakota, a small ice house on the East side. At the end of 2020, he purchased the trailer from Lucas Bradbury, the CEO of Project Pollo. The rest is history.

So, how did a guy from Milton Keynes end up in San Antonio? Rose studied Spanish at university and was bit by the travel bug. He traveled through South America, where he met his now-wife. They ended up in San Antonio, where Rose settled down and became a fourth-grade teacher at Gallardo Elementary.

“Mr. Rose was my fourth-grade teacher. He’s a great guy and the food is amazing,” said customer Hector Valadez.

Small businesses have struggled to stay afloat during the pandemic and continues to be one on the other side of it as well. Rose was lucky enough to receive some grants from the city to keep on serving the city.

“It’s really hard to stay afloat. Putting a lot in: a lot of hard work and money. I think it’s been great work because I really feel like I’ve got a good imprint. I have a bit of a brand and people know it,” Rose said.

As a fan of his food, I had to indulge myself. Like always, the portion size is enormous, the fish is cooked to perfection and the chips are perfectly crispy.

As first-time customer Kris Aleman said, “the food is too legit to quit.”

Rosey’s Fish and Chips can be found Wednesdays outside Black Laboratory Brewing (1602 E. Houston St.) and Fridays outside the Tandem (310 Riverside Dr.).

FOOD'S NOT DEAD!

BY MIRANDA RODRIGUEZ



VICIOUS EATS IS A FOOD TRUCK WITH DELICIOUS FOODS AND A DIY PUNK ROCK ATTITUDE.

When it comes to burgers, I am obsessed. Seeking the best burgers in the city is a Rodriguez family tradition, and Vicious Eats is a worthy competitor up for the challenge.

Vicious Eats is a self-described “working-class punk rock food truck.”

Chef Chaz Morales and wife Traci Kolesar-Morales are serving up monster burgers with a killer flavor. They use high-quality ingredients: the burgers are made from wagyu beef, and Chaz Morales makes her own pickles, coleslaw and the signature Vicious sauce. The fries are also hand-cut. (My advice is to ditch the ketchup and go ham with the Vicious sauce.)

Opening at the beginning of the pandemic, Vicious Eats embraced the DIY punk culture, which is part of their brand and inspiration. They took to the streets of San Antonio to unleash a world of flavor.

At the beginning of 2022, Vicious Eats became the official food truck for Kings of Horror, a monthly horror pop-up market and comic book convention. Since then, Vicious Eats has grown its audience and has a number of loyal groupies (of which I am one.)



Photo: Nef Hernandez



Photo Courtesy of Vicious Eats

Vicious Eats recently catered for the celebrities at the Kings of Horror “Punk Rock Swap Meet” event. Cherie Currie sampled their Guac Among Us, a plate of deep-fried avocados covered in Hot Cheeto dust and Vicious Sauce.

“In my 63 years, I’ve never heard of fried avocado. It’s delicious,” said Currie.

For a first-timer, I recommend the Smash ‘Em burger. It’s a double meat burger served with Vicious sauce, housemade pickles, lettuce, tomato and onions. Be warned, you will get messy! If beef isn’t your thing, try the Dirty Birdy, a fried chicken sandwich served with homemade pickles and coleslaw and Vicious sauce.

abcdef

Photo: Miranda Rodriguez



Photo: Miranda Rodriguez

11+11+3

LIVES ROBBED:

FOREVER IN 4TH GRADE

BY MIRANDA RODRIGUEZ & SARAH CERVERA

MAY 24, 2022

Another school year was coming to an end. Children prepared their final assignments and were excited for the end-of-the-year awards. Summer was just around the corner. But students at Robb Elementary in Uvalde, Texas never got the chance to experience summer. On that morning Robb Elementary became the target of an 18-year-old armed with an assault rifle. He fatally shot 19 students, two teachers and severely wounded several others.

Six months later, Uvalde is more poignant than ever. Lives have been forever changed, forever marked by a single day. How does a community continue?

Even as we are writing this piece, there are more stories unfolding about what exactly happened that day. We may never truly understand the gravity of this tragic event and the families may never find peace, but we need to talk about it so we can remember the 21 lives lost.

Photo: Sarah Cervera

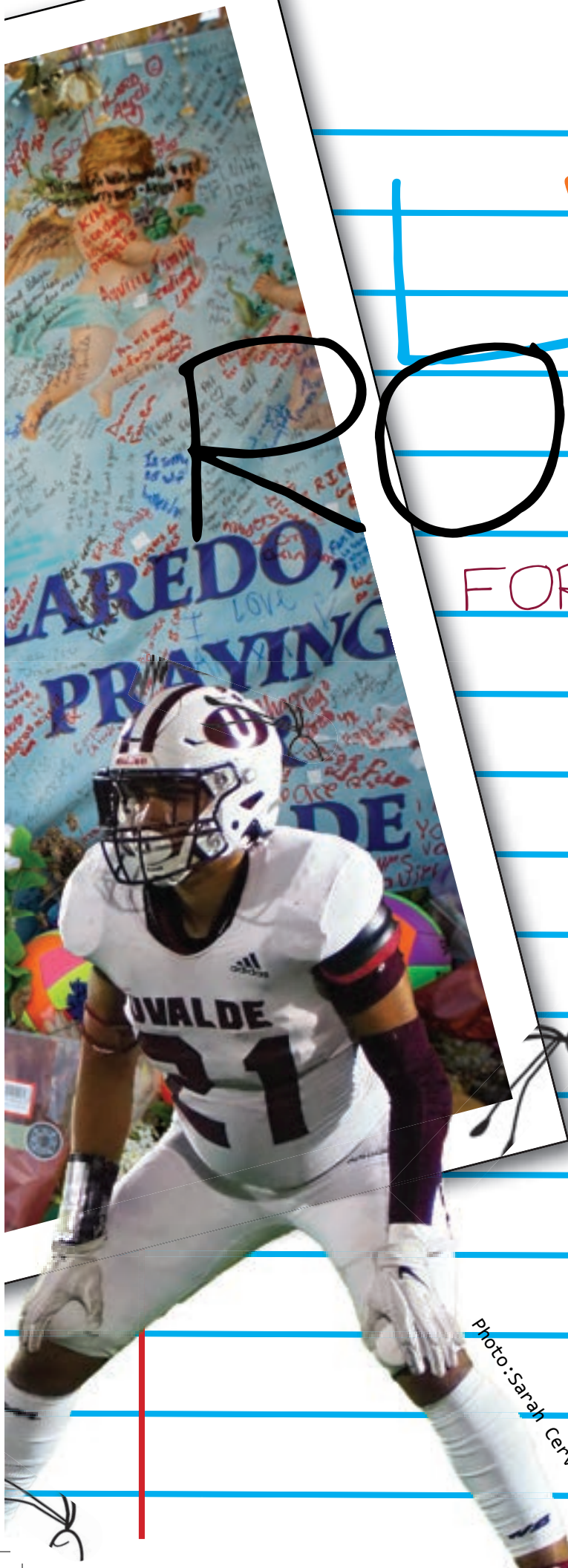
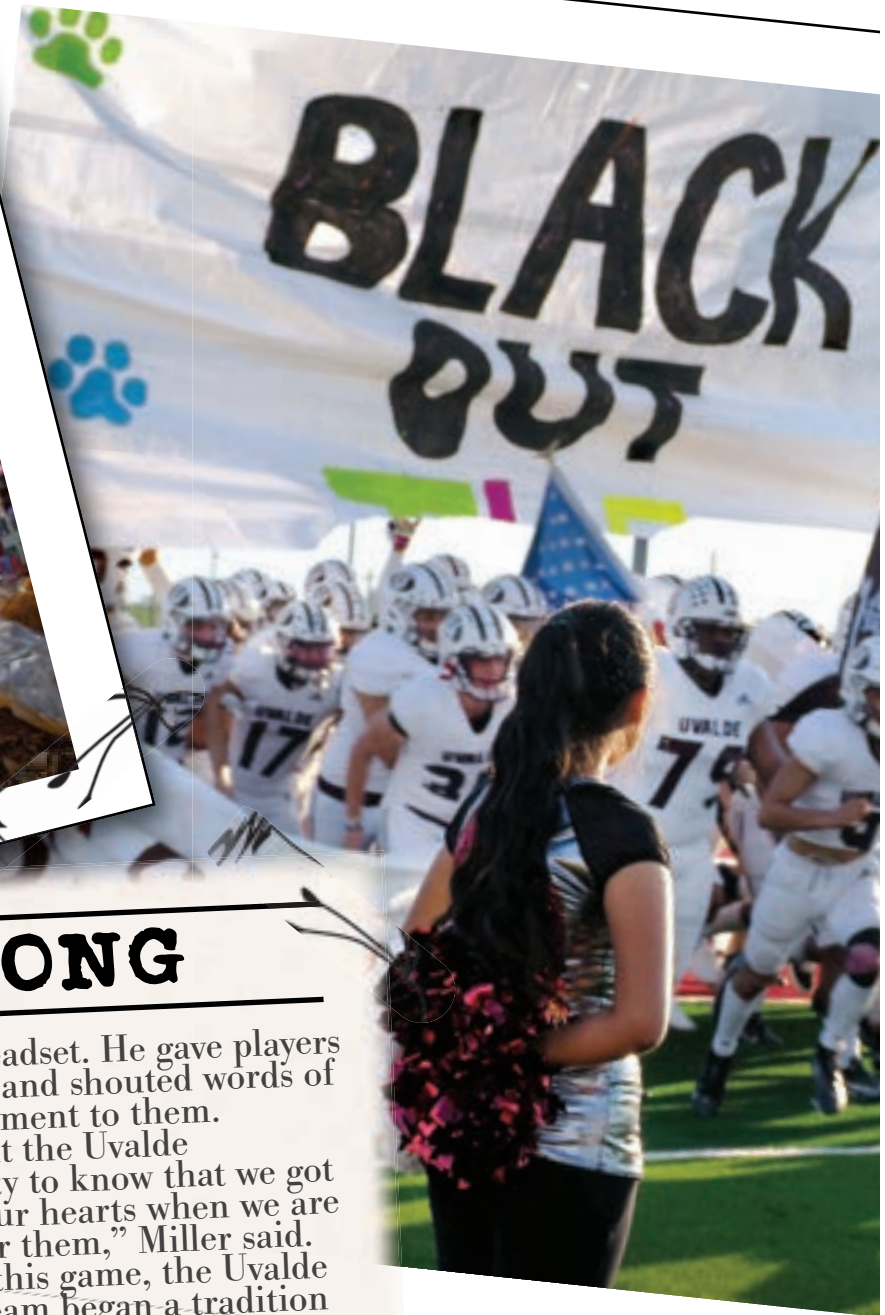


Photo: Miranda Rodriguez



UVALDE STRONG

On Sept. 9, the hot, orange and pink glow of the Texas evening sunset spread across the sky. The ground began to rumble beneath the feet of the Uvalde High School football players. They stampeded through their breakaway banner that read: "Black out the Aggies."

Three Uvalde players held flags, one stating: "Mourning and Remembering Our 21." Cheerleaders on the sidelines yelled, "We are Uvalde strong, stand up and shout!" Hundreds of Uvalde parents, family, friends and fans, who were packed shoulder to shoulder in the stands, responded by exclaiming, "Go Coyotes!"

The Uvalde football team was not only playing for themselves, but also for its grieving community back home. It was an attempt to bring back a sense of normalcy through the Friday night lights. Back on the sidelines, Wade Miller, Uvalde High School head football coach, wrote plays and spoke

into his headset. He gave players directions and shouted words of encouragement to them.

"We want the Uvalde community to know that we got them in our hearts when we are playing for them," Miller said.

During this game, the Uvalde football team began a tradition of dedicating the number 21 jersey to a worthy individual on the team. The student-athlete who wears the number 21 jersey commemorates the 21 fallen victims of the school shooting.

"We were thinking of retiring the number 21 jersey," Miller said. "We now decided to give the number 21 to a deserving senior."

This year, the number 21 jersey can be seen across the back of senior and captain Justyn Rendon, whose little brother survived the Robb Elementary school shooting.

"You can feel it. We are playing for more than ourselves," Miller said.

22+2+1

MISS YOU UZIYAH

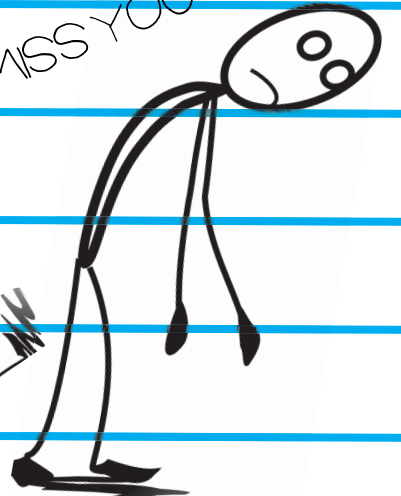




Photo: Sarah Cervera



Photo: Miranda Rodriguez

abcdet



Photo: Miranda Rodriguez

"We are tired of our loved ones having an expiration date."





WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

For nearly six months, the Texas government has done nothing for the victim's families. The families' demands are simple. Common-sense, even. They want the entities involved to be held accountable, and they are demanding Gov. Greg Abbott enact common-sense gun laws, like implementing universal background checks, red flag laws and raising the age to buy assault weapons from 18 to 21.

On Aug. 27, over 1,000 activists, survivors of mass shootings and families gathered on the steps of the Texas Capitol demanding Abbott hold a special session to raise the minimum age to buy assault weapons.

A soft yet confident voice rang out over the sound system, "I was at Robb Elementary on the day of the shooting. I am here today to make a change," said student Catelyne Gonzales. The reality of this rally set in. The air became heavy, quiet and tense.

Many of the attendees traveled more than 160 miles to Austin from Uvalde. Armed only with signs begging for change and carrying photographs of the victims from the Robb Elementary school shooting, the pleas for change echoed

through the Capitol's entrance.

"We are tired of our loved ones having an expiration date," said Sam Fuentes, March for Our Lives activist and survivor of the 2018 Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Florida.

The message that Texas needs more common-sense gun laws reverberated through the crowd. Mother Kimberly Rubio's statement about the person whom she admires the most brought the crowd to tears. She spoke about a young lady who graduated from St. Mary's University with a bachelor's in mathematics and has applied to St. Mary's School of Law, all while coaching little league softball. Then the final lines dropped.

"I said, 'How can you manage all of this?' She said, 'Mom, I can do anything.' Except she can't because this young woman only exists in my imagination... Lexi will forever be 10 years old. But when I close my eyes, I dream of a different life."

March for Our Lives activist and survivor of the 2021 Oxford (Michigan) High School shooting, Zoe Touray, closed the rally by saying, "Kids of Texas are living on borrowed time."

GUN CONTROL

These pleas for change have sparked a dialogue in Texas, and many say it will continue to exist as an important point on the ballot. In the state of Texas, individuals must be 21 to purchase a handgun, but can legally purchase an assault weapon at 18. Increasing the age to buy an assault weapon from 18 to 21 is a reasonable compromise. Ideally, the purchase of military-grade weapons should be banned completely, but in reality, it may never happen.

Gov. Abbott claims that the root cause of mass shootings is mental illness. If this is true, then it would be common sense to increase the minimum age to purchase any weapon to 25. Scientists and psychologists have confirmed that the adult brain is not fully developed until the age of 25. Increasing the age to 25 would then take into account being able to appropriately identify the possible development of mental illness in a timely manner.

"Kids of Texas are living on borrowed time."

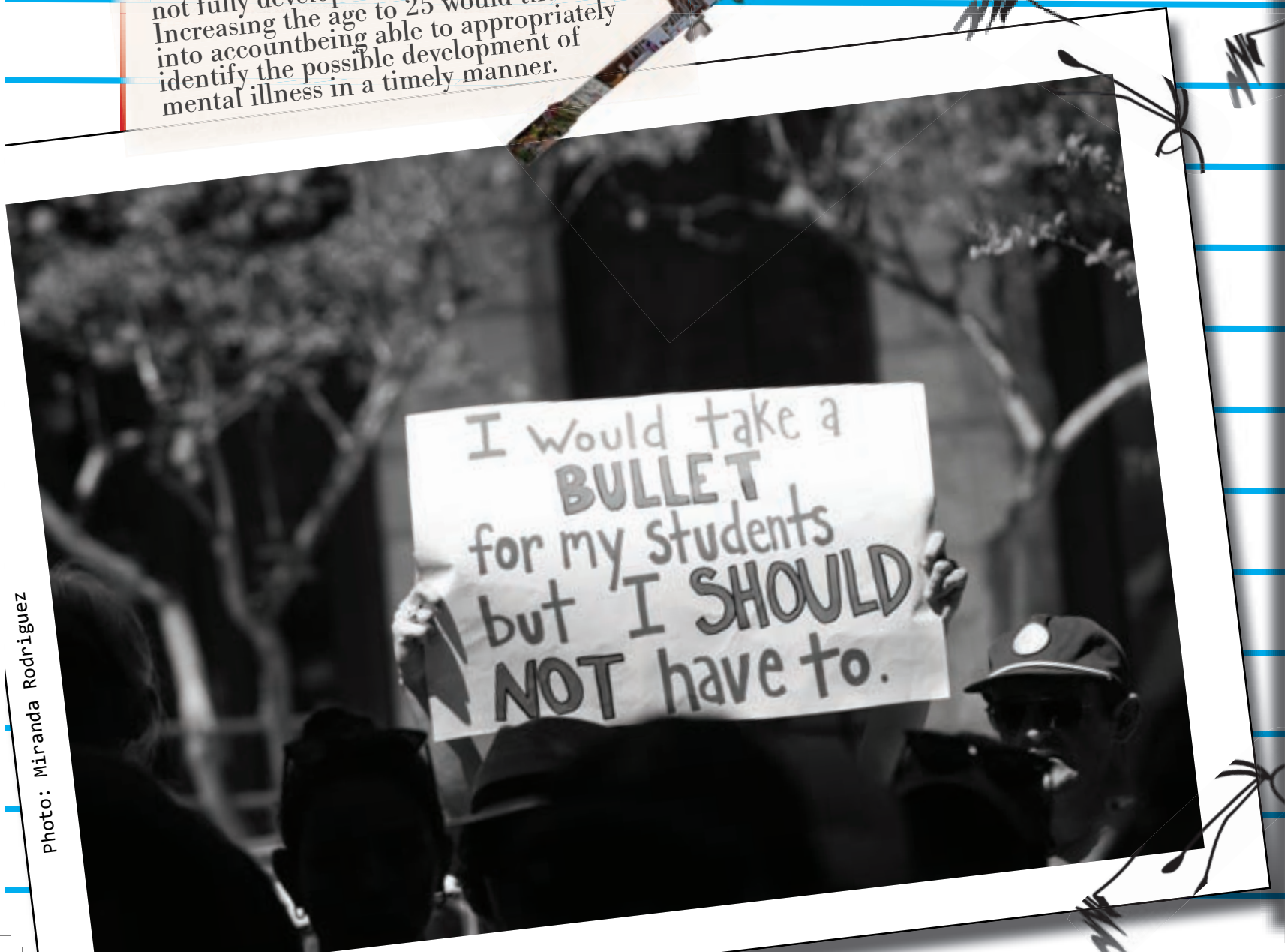


Photo: Miranda Rodriguez

Photo: Miranda Rodriguez



Photo: Miranda Rodriguez

CONCLUSION

Even though Republican Governor Gregg Abbott did not pass any gun reform after the Robb Elementary massacre, voters still decided to re-elect him in the 2022 gubernatorial election. Abbott will be serving his third term as governor, with no plans of making any major changes to gun reform.

When the voting results from each individual county in Texas were analyzed, it became clear the majority of Uvalde County supported re-electing Abbott, even though one of America's deadliest mass shootings happened only five months prior. In fact, 60% of Uvalde County voted for Abbott while only 38% voted in favor of Democratic opponent Beto O'Rourke, according to an ABC political analysis.

O'Rourke had campaigned heavily on the notion that, in Texas, Second Amendment rights can be protected while also protecting society from gun violence. After the shooting at Robb Elementary, O'Rourke promised voters he would change laws to ban assault-style weapons in an effort to prevent future mass shootings.

The Uvalde family victims supported O'Rourke by agreeing to create a campaign advertisement depicting their support for O'Rourke's legislative agenda. On Nov. 8, 2022, it was clear that Uvalde County and Texas as a whole did not support the Robb Elementary victims' families, because the majority of voters agreed with Abbott's response to one of the deadliest mass shootings in the country.



Photo: Miranda Rodriguez

Photo: Miranda Rodriguez

TEXAS:
Where GUNS
Have more Rights
Than WOMEN



TEXAS VS. WOMEN

BY: MIRANDA RODRIGUEZ &
SERENITY HERNANDEZ BOGERT

A little plus sign or hearing the words “you’re pregnant” might be joyous for some, but not everyone wants to bear children - let alone, be forced by a government to carry a fetus to term.

Senate Bill 8, or the Texas Heartbeat Act went into effect in September 2021. SB-8 is the strictest abortion ban in the U.S. This act outlaws abortions as early as six weeks. 85% of abortions occur after this point. This abortion ban also doesn’t make exceptions for rape or incest.

On June 24, in a 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court overturned the 1973 abortion rights case *Roe v. Wade*. The overruling is upheld by the case of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, a 6-3 decision made the same day that supported a Mississippi law that banned most abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy. The Court’s *Roe v. Wade* ruling declares that the right to abortion is not explicitly protected under the

U.S. Constitution on a federal level, thus leaving the matter up to the States.

The ruling undoes almost 50 years of precedent when it comes to abortion rights, and destabilizes the certainty of other rights currently supported by the Fourteenth Amendment.

Seeking an abortion is often a tough decision, and there is something explicitly taboo when it comes to speaking about it publicly. We spoke with a young woman who has chosen to share her truth.

Stephanie Gómez shares her story because she doesn’t want anyone to feel alone.

“I never thought I would talk about my abortion openly. I really thought, ‘I’m never gonna tell anyone about this ever again.’”

Gómez is a storyteller with We Testify. According to its website, We Testify is an organization dedicated to the leadership and



Photo: Miranda Rodriguez

representation of people who have abortions, increasing the spectrum of abortion storytellers in the public sphere, and shifting the way the media understands the context and complexity of accessing abortion care.

“In the grand scheme of things, it’s always been a story of advancement in the U.S. But that day, I went to bed with certain rights, and then I woke up with fewer rights,” says Gómez. “That was my first experience of that.”

Gómez describes how the myth of horrible

abortions is often just a tactic to scare young women. She describes her experience as “two weeks of logistical stress for a five-minute operation.”

There are many other women in San Antonio who have similar stories to Gómez. And the City of San Antonio recognizes this. In July 2022, the City Council passed an abortion resolution with a 9-2 vote. Introduced by District 5 Councilwoman Teri Castillo, the resolution does not change state law and does not make abortion legal in San Antonio.

“But that day, I went to bed with certain rights, & then I woke up with fewer rights.”

It does, however, recommend that city funds not be used in investigating, reporting, or storing information about abortions. According to the council, city staff plan to advocate for abortion access to state and congressional lawmakers. It also plans to make abortion access a priority in the city's legislative agenda.

Those in support of abortion access argue that abortion is indeed health care, and the woman and her human thoughts and feelings is the biggest part of the equation.

"Overcoming a lot of that state-sanctioned self-guilt - it's a decision I feel good about," says Gómez.

"The only times I felt worried were before and during [the operation.] I was 18 and still in high school, and it was difficult finding non-judgmental and actual information. But when it finally happened and afterward, I was just like, 'Is that it?' It was a five-minute procedure, but the State built it up to be this big scary thing. I felt nothing but relieved."

With Gov. Abbott's gubernatorial win, the abortion ban in Texas will most likely remain. In the only debate between Beto O'Rourke and Gov. Abbott, stated that the alternative to the abortion program is to increase funding for prenatal and postpartum care.

For more on abortion access visit: needanabortion.org, National Network of Abortion Funds or the National Abortion Federation Hotline.



Photo: Miranda Rodriguez

Views on Elections from the Formerly Apolitical STATE OF TEXAS By El Espejo Staff

TO VOTE: YOU MUST DARKEN THE OVAL () COMPLETELY
USING A BLACK OR BLUE PEN.


Do not use a red pen, felt tip pen, or any type of pencil.

Do not cross out or erase - If you make a mistake you must
request a new ballot.



Photo: Miranda Rodriguez

Special Election:

 Miranda Rodriguez

I never really cared much about politics until recently, because now the choices being made have a direct impact on my life. In fact, I never exercised my right to vote before this election because that is how little I cared. Writing this piece makes me slightly uncomfortable because I understand it may be hard for some people to hear. I am a fourth-generation Mexican-American and a third-generation college student. This is me acknowledging my privilege and providing some context on how I was raised.

As I have grown in the opposite direction of my family's groupthink mentality, I have undertaken the responsibility to educate myself about politics and the current state of affairs. The most important issues I voted for in this election were LGBTQ+ rights, increased gun control and access to safe abortions. One issue that was a point of self-conflict: the competing views on law enforcement. But this didn't change who I voted for.

Growing up in a law enforcement family, this was the career path that was basically determined for me at birth. To be transparent, I have a degree in criminal justice and was a police explorer for years. Police explorers is like JROTC for teens who want to go into law enforcement. I understand what it takes to be an officer, and honestly, I still respect it. I have come to the decision that the police should be held accountable for their actions, but I do not believe in defunding the police.

One thing that some might think contradicts my support for law enforcement is my stance on gun control. There is absolutely no reason for a regular citizen to possess military-grade weapons. Access to guns is one of the leading causes of death among children. I have fired an AR-15 and I can attest that it is a strange feeling standing on that side of the weapon. With such little recoil, it can be easy to disassociate from reality.

The results of this gubernatorial election were disappointing, but deep down I knew Texas wasn't ready for change. Change is scary. One day, change will come, and the young people of Texas will make it happen.



Illustration: Sarah Cervera

Special Election:

 Elizabeth Lopez

Sigh. Politics are unreal to me sometimes. It's such a controversial topic and it sucks to talk about with people that don't have similar views as you. On the other hand, it can also be a very insightful conversation. That's also the beauty of politics and democracy.

I don't know why I never cared to vote in the past. I guess I didn't think I could make educated choices. It also wasn't something my Salvadorian parents taught me to do, even as soon as I turned 18. I never knew who was on the ballot and I just thought, "I better leave that to the people that know what they're doing." I understood the level of importance of elections, so I felt like I would mess things up if I just went in there and started guessing. As I got older, I learned about voter suppression and gerrymandering in my government classes, and I became upset. That was the beginning of my frustration with people that are in charge of making important decisions, so I decided to start exercising my right to vote at the age of 25. This term, I was voting for gun control, LGBTQ+ rights, access to safe abortion care, and immigration reform: Beto's focal points. Despite the outcome, I don't think he'll give up that easily - just look at those young voter numbers. Don't be like me and miss out on chances to vote. Get out there and make your ballot count.

For Governor of Texas

Democrat: Beto O'Rourke

Republican: Greg Abbott

Write-in



Photo: Miranda Rodriguez



Photo: Miranda Rodríguez

For Equality

- LGBTQIA+ Rights
- Gun Control
- Women's Rights
- Immigration

**“ One day
change will
come, and the
young people
of Texas
will make it
happen. ”**

Special Election:

 Matt Cuevas

Politics today have become more about morality than anything else, in my opinion.

It has become more about that than what political party one has always associated with, or even a particular candidate. Too often, I feel like people overcomplicate things and forget what is right and what is wrong. Morality and common sense - that's it. Do you have any or not? I myself am cursed with both, which is why I prefer my presidential nominees to be of sound mind and body. Not former reality TV "stars" with \$2 spray tans who have ever felt it was OK to say, "Grab'em by the p****" when referring to a woman. Guess, I'm just old-fashioned that way. I stand firmly on the side that isn't about telling a woman what she can or cannot do with her own body. Period.

Special Election:

 Thalia Guzman

For me, Beto O'Rourke became my greatest hope for a blue state since his run for the US Senate against Ted Cruz in 2018. As a first-generation Mexican-American, politics was never talked about in my home. So, I never cared about politics or exercised my right to vote. Beto's senatorial race against Ted was when I really started to see a drive for young voters to head to the polls, including myself. Fast forward to 2022 for the gubernatorial race, it was important to me that Beto was focused on raising the minimum wage, supporting access to abortion care, immigration reform, gun safety and LGBTQ+ rights. I now understand the importance of voting for the right leaders to represent me. Even after a third electoral loss against Governor Gregg Abbott on Nov. 8, I still see a political future for Beto.

“ Don't be like me and miss out on your chance to vote. ”

...And Justice For All

African American

Native American

White

Human



Society

We dive into issues from immigration to mental health to help start conversations to influence change in society.

↑
DESTINY
CABALLERO
Texas A&M
University-San
Antonio Student



MENTAL HEALTH

52

As she holds the journal in which she writes her most personal thoughts, Veronica Pusateri reads a reflection piece she wrote, "Deep Daydreaming," to students and faculty on World Mental Health Day.



UNA HISTORIA DE LUCHA

54

Mari, de 36 años, es recién llegada de El Salvador a los Estados Unidos. Sus dos hijos, de 15 y 12 años, se quedaron solos en El Salvador.

MENTAL HEALTH: A HEALING JOURNEY

BY THALÍA GUZMÁN



AS SHE HOLDS THE JOURNAL IN WHICH SHE WRITES HER MOST PERSONAL THOUGHTS,

Veronica Pusateri reads a reflection piece she wrote, “Deep Daydreaming,” to students and faculty on World Mental Health Day.

“Where I was coming from with the piece is that I sort of started to lean a lot on just the sheer power of reflecting on anything that you’re thinking about: things that have happened to you, things that you’ve felt or thought processes that you can’t really get out. It’s helped me a lot in really feeling my emotions and sort of letting them pass through.”

Veronica was previously a STEM major until she soon realized she wasn’t pursuing what she really wanted. She is now a sophomore studying to become an English teacher, but it took some personal breakthroughs to get there. Life experiences and starting college were reality checks for her, then she realized that college wasn’t the linear path she imagined when she was in high school. It became a difficult transition for her.



Photo: Megan Pope

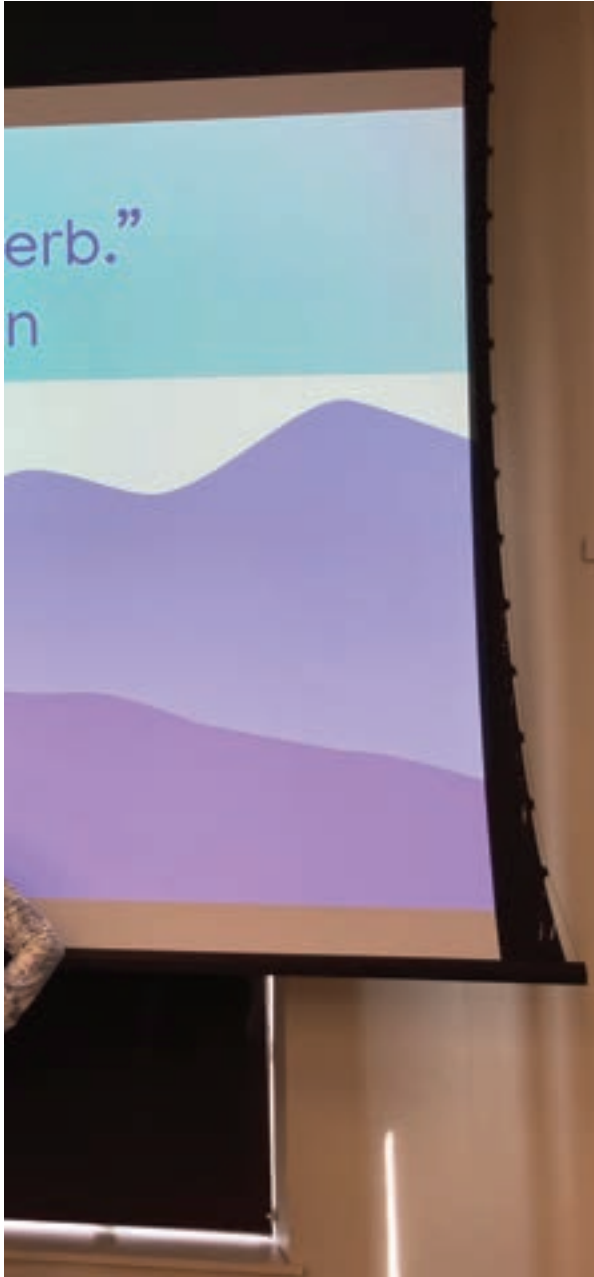
“I was really stressed all the time and didn’t have the time for myself. I was needing to find myself and trying to build relationships, and find my place here at A&M-San Antonio. You get so busy that you don’t make time for yourself.”

Pusateri had plans to go to medical school because she thought it was the best thing to do for herself. That’s what she heard most of her life. But she wasn’t where she was supposed to be. She decided studying to become a teacher was the best pursuit for her.

“[Teaching is] one of the greatest possible things that a person can do. I got to see that there’s more than one path that I can choose, and I would still be valid and successful. And the most important thing is that I’m doing what I’m passionate about.”

In “Deep Daydreaming,” she reflects on shedding her “self-deprecating” tendencies and being more kind to herself. Her reflections were eye-opening, and showed her that it’s possible to live the life that wants.





“I think [“Deep Daydreaming”] is sort of a celebration in itself because what I’m doing is kind of showing off what I’ve learned and where I’ve grown. It was really special. I want to urge people not to put pressure on themselves. It doesn’t happen in a day. It’s not one journal session - it’s not one hour of meditation.”

Read “Deep Daydreaming” here:

Do you have the time to think? I never used to. Once I got it, I realized I had two years’ worth of thoughts to sift through. I spent

months jumping between those trains, taking the time to answer each of my questions. Nowadays, reflection steadies me when I get off-balance. I’ve learned how to depend on myself for the clarity I need.

These long thinks I find myself having aren’t always easy—or intentional. Sometimes, my brain decides to do the thinking for me, so I just sit and settle into those thoughts; probing for more when it seems like I’m holding back, as an active form of meditation.

Sometimes, it’s a battle. I stand tall, sword in hand, conquering memories on a quest for my point of view. There is usually a reason when something refuses to leave my mind; I’ve learned to face that reason and reckon with it.

Sometimes, it’s a dance. I do a lot of thinking to music and in the sunlight when I can. I let my musings wash over me, sinking into the warm embrace of whatever I’m pondering that day—hence the term, “deep daydreaming.”

This September, I was particularly fond of life between the hours of 5 and 8pm; I found myself facing the sun and letting it blaze away any potential for negative thought.

For me, deep daydreaming is a balance between close observations of separate experiences and wider glimpses of myself as a whole individual. I’ve found that embracing my own complexity allows me to see it in others, and I’ve shed the assumption that no one understands what I’ve been through.

Simply put, I started exploring every thought—especially the ones that linger. I get curious, analytical. I let my mind wander, and rogue uncertainties become concepts that I can probe for my point of view. It’s an ongoing process of asking myself a question and then producing the answer. I’ve become a student of life, a gardener of my plot.

I want to acknowledge that it takes time to reach the root of a lingering thought, especially when you’ve poured cement in where soft earth should be. I’ve had to shed my self-deprecating tendencies and give myself the grace I needed. Once I reach a root, I pull, and emotion comes like long-awaited rainfall. The earth softens again, and I can start to grow.

It’s hard to look steadily at yourself. Even harder to do so objectively. You start to realize which of your burdens are not truly yours and which of your wounds are impermanent. Both

are harsh realities to face, and facing them is only the first step.

As you shed burdens that don’t belong to you, you will feel your spine grow longer. As you heal wounds you once thought were scars, you will notice that the world can’t cut as deeply as it used to.

What do you want yourself to know?

Megan Pope is in her seventh year as a speech and public speaking professor at A&M-San Antonio. She was also the first speech professor on campus. She is a big fan of “compassionate pedagogy,” which essentially means she focuses on centering compassion in education. She is an advocate for improving the mental health of students, faculty and staff. She was one of the co-organizers of the World Mental Health Day event on campus on Oct. 10.

Pope, a Texas native, has been teaching since she was 22. She moved back to her home state after teaching for a few years at a larger university in California. It was a refreshing start to teach at a university and make an impact on students who are primarily first-generation, and may have struggles than other students do.

“I moved back to Texas and I got the job at A&M-San Antonio and I was really excited. I’m from here. And I was really happy because I feel that I’m actually impacting people’s lives. Whereas before, I think I was just sort of like a check mark on a student’s transcript.”

Pope had depression and anxiety when the pandemic hit as she struggled to stay hopeful for her and her students. She wanted to be there for her students by checking in with them before class.

“I realized that I could maybe help them feel like they’re not alone. So I started to just ask really pointed questions to my students, like: ‘How are you today? Are you OK?’ And I would start class off with maybe, ‘Give me a two-word check-in; What are you grateful for today?’ Just little things.”

After realizing she could do more for her students, Pope wanted to bring meditation to campus and got certified through Koru Mindfulness for mindful meditation for college students in June 2022. Although still in training, Pope has led meditation sessions off

CONTINUES ON PG. 56

UNA HISTORIA DE LUCHA

BY ELIZABETH LOPEZ

Nota del editor: Por razones de privacidad y seguridad, solo se utilizan los nombres de pila y se excluirá otra información de identificación. Todas las referencias al dinero están en dólares estadounidenses. Esta historia está originalmente escrita en español y ha sido traducida al inglés para nuestros lectores, y esta disponible en línea.



MARI, DE 36 AÑOS, ES RECIÉN LLEGADA DE EL SALVADOR A LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS. Sus

dos hijos, de 15 y 12 años, se quedaron solos en El Salvador. Mari es de una zona rural de El Salvador donde la mayoría de la gente es pobre y depende de los ingresos agrícolas para sobrevivir.

“Bueno, uno dice que está bien, porque en realidad no van a decir que están mal. Pero usted sabe que uno llega a un lugar nuevo, donde nunca, nunca ha estado, nunca ha visitado, que está lejos de las personas que más quiere que, en mi caso, son mis hijos,” tristemente dice Mari.

Su historia va un poco así.

En 2015, el esposo de Mari, Luis, se enfermó debido a una insuficiencia renal. Durante seis años, Mari cambió su enfoque de depender completamente de Luis a cuidarlo y mantenerlo. Mari y sus hijos han tenido que adaptarse al nuevo estilo de vida formado a partir de la condición de Luis.

Por cada diálisis eran \$120, también tenía que pagar la medicina, una leche especial que tenía que tomar al diario que costaba \$5, el mototaxi, y las cosas más básicas de necesidad. Antes de esto, Mari no trabajaba y solo se enfocaba en los quehaceres de la casa y los niños. Luis era el que traía todos los ingresos a

casa, entonces en estos momentos Mari empezó una lucha como esposa y madre.

Mari bañaba a Luis, lo cambiaba, le daba de comer y le ayudaba con sus tratamientos. Ella se convirtió en la cuidadora primaria de Luis. A veces, ella tenía que perder días de trabajo, pero manejaba el dinero que entraba lo mejor que ella podía. Por años, Mari llevaba a Luis al hospital, que no quedaba cerca, y se aseguraba de que su condición mejoraría.

Con lo poco que ella conseguía de su trabajo en un comedor, y lo que Luis recibía de la gente buena del cantón, ellos pudieron tener una rutina constante por un poco de tiempo. Nunca era suficiente, pero no se daban por vencidos, ellos seguían con fe. Algunas veces, Mari pensaba en venirse a los Estados Unidos para mandar dinero a Luis y a los niños.

Había otros momentos donde llegaba la noche y no había dinero para las citas del próximo día, pero alguien siempre les ayudaba. Mari dice que a veces “uno se desespera,” pero que Luis nunca perdía la fe y nunca perdió una cita de doctor.

Uno de los últimos momentos que Mari pasó con Luis cuando estaba ingresado en el hospital fue cuando Luis le pidió a Mari que lo afeitara. Mari en este momento se acordó que ya lo había afeitado el día anterior, pero Luis insistió. “Me deberías de afeitar,” dice Luis, “No traes la barba grande,” le dice Mari. “No, pero afeitame otra vez,” le dijo Luis, “Ah, vaya, está bien,” le

dijo Mari a Luis. Después, ella le trajo un café, y platicaron un poco más sobre los niños hasta el próximo día.

Mari tomaba turnos con su sobrina cuando Luis estaba ingresado, y en ese día ella se fue del hospital como a las 7 de la mañana. Se despidió de Luis y se regresó a la casa a ver cómo estaban los niños. Esa noche Mari recibió una llamada muy extraña donde le preguntaban que si ella era familiar de don Luis. Ella les dijo que sí, y preguntó que porqué, pero le colgaron y ya no supo quien fue que le llamó. El presentimiento de Mari no era bueno. Momentos después ella recibió una llamada de su sobrina donde le informó que Luis había muerto.

Cuando Luis falleció en octubre 2021, Mari y los niños quedaron destrozados. Y entre todo el dolor que ella sentía de haber perdido su pareja, ella todavía encontró la fuerza y decidió que ella tenía que hacer lo imposible para poder cuidar y mantener a su familia.

En El Salvador, la economía para la gente que no son graduados o sin alguna maestría, no funciona ni para lo más mínimo. Mari dice que todos los gastos han subido y que ella no gana lo suficiente. “Sentía pues que, que no, que allá no se salía, por más que trabajara,” dijo Mari. El ingreso de ella al mes era alrededor de \$200, y esto es si trabajaba los cinco días de la semana.

El quintal de maíz, que son como 100 libras, cuesta \$50 donde vive Mari. Antes ella pagaba \$15 al mes por luz, y ahora paga el doble. Estos gastos no incluyen fertilizante, que es lo que ella usa para crecer arroz y frijoles. Los niños también necesitan útiles, y acceso al internet. Entonces Mari, decidió que era hora de tratar de sacar a su familia adelante. Era hora de ir al Norte en búsqueda de algo mejor.

Mari sacó un préstamo de \$15,000 para pagar su viaje a los Estados Unidos. Se fue el 10 de julio. El préstamo no solo pagó su venida, sino también le dio la oportunidad de dejarle dinero a sus hijos en lo que ella llega y empieza a trabajar.

La despedida fue muy triste para ella porque sabía que si ella dejaba a los niños, la familia de Luis no se harían cargo de ellos, aunque dijeran que sí. “Antes de venirme, preparé a una señora que me ayuda mucho allí en el cantón, y le dije que si algo me pasaba en el camino, que me





**“Y así,
ella
lucha.”**

Illustration: Augustine Caldera IV

encuentre a alguien que quiera a mis hijos,” dijo Mari.

En su camino a los Estados Unidos, Mari de nuevo se encontró luchando fuerte para sobrevivir. La esperanza de llegar a trabajar y empezar a ahorrar dinero para sus hijos la mantuvo viva durante ese mes. Para ella ese mes se sintió tan largo, y lleno de miedo. Muchos de los momentos fueron llenos de nervios de ser atrapada.

Mari tomó un carro hasta San Salvador, ES,

y de allí le dijeron que tenía que comprar un vuelo de autobús para Guatemala. Mari tenía la impresión que cuando llegaran a Guatemala, alguien los iba estar esperando, pero pasaron horas de anticipación y nadie llegaba. Mari y el grupo con los que venía no sabían en ese momento qué iba a pasar.

La razón porque nadie estaba esperando al grupo de Mari es porque nadie le dijo al coyote que iban en camino. El coyote es un contrabandista de personas, y lo hace por una

tarifa. El coyote le dijo al grupo que tenían suerte de que nadie les había robado todavía, porque si los ven con mochila, rápido se dan cuenta que no son de aquí. En Guatemala, los que van camino al Norte no son recibidos con brazos abiertos.

A Mari le quitaron dinero en un punto de control y la maltrataron, aunque es una mujer.

CONTINUES ON PG. 56

CONTINUES FROM PG. 53

campus and began integrating meditation in her classes in the summer 2022 semester.

“I cannot solve my students’ problems, right? And I don’t pretend to have a magic wand, but what I can do is I can sit with them in their problems and I can say, you’re not alone. I’ve been there too. So for me, compassionate pedagogy is: How do we treat students and ourselves with loving, kindness and compassion?”

Compassionate pedagogy has changed Pope’s teaching dynamic.

“It all kind of ties together. I used to look at students like, ‘You have to do your homework, and if it’s not done, you fail’, right? But everyone is deserving of kindness and respect, and how we make decisions should be guided by compassion.”

“Celebrating mental health is really celebrating yourself, celebrating your obstacles that you’ve overcome.”

On Oct. 10, Destiny Caballero attended the on-campus “You Are Not Alone” open mic session on World Mental Health Day. Caballero was one of six students to take the mic and share her mental health journey with students and faculty.

Caballero experienced traumatic events in her life at a young age. She experienced child abuse and dealt with depression, anxiety, PTSD and other mental health issues. Caballero grew up in San Antonio and Houston, and at one point in her life, she and her biological mother were homeless, leading Caballero to assume care under Child Protective Services. Her mother died because of a drug overdose, then was adopted by her aunt and uncle, Maria and Raul John Caballero, whom she considers her parents.

“I was a very angry child, as you can imagine, somebody going through those things. So, it took a bit of time for me to be able to, I guess, get a little bit better mentally.”

Struggling with trust, Caballero says it was difficult turning to others for help. She felt alone as she tried to adjust to a new environment, home and school. She started her healing journey around the age of 7. Her newly adopted parents made sure she received the care she needed in order to overcome all she went through.

Unprepared after adopting her, she and her parents also attended therapy. After a few years, Caballero began to understand her battles and healing process. Still, it wasn’t easy. Mental health was something she would deal with until she went to college.

“It is something that doesn’t go away, but it’s all about coping with it.”

Caballero lost her father before the pandemic and college became overwhelming. She eventually lost a few more members of her family and decided to take a break from school to focus on her well-being.

“I had to withdraw because mentally, I couldn’t take it, and I had to choose something that was right for me. And that meant I had to take time mentally to get a little bit better and reflect on my goals.”

Meditation and journaling is her primary form of self-care. Writing her personal thoughts is another way of self-therapy when she is not seeing a therapist. She celebrates her victories by occasionally taking herself out on dates and taking care of her body.

“I usually take myself out, whether it’s something small like getting ice cream or getting my nails done... Be kind to yourself. Be patient with yourself and your journey.”

Despite life’s challenges, she is determined to finish college. Since the first day her parents took her in until a day before her dad’s passing, she stays motivated by the memory of her dad who always reminded her to never give up on her goals. Although uncertain about what career path she wants to take, she knows she wants to be a voice for others who can’t advocate for themselves.

The Student Counseling Center is available 24/7 for students currently enrolled at A&M-San Antonio. Students can call 210-784-1331 and make an appointment by phone or in person by visiting Modular C, room 166 (rear entrance). Students can call after hours by selecting option “2” to speak with a licensed clinician. Follow @tamustudentcounseling on Instagram or visit their department page on the universities website at <https://www.tamusa.edu/student-counseling/index.html> for more information. Contact the University Police Department at 210-784-1911 or 911 immediately for on-campus emergencies.

CONTINUES FROM PG. 55

Para muchos en estos lugares, esta es una oportunidad de aprovecharse de los grupos débiles, y vulnerables. Aun así, siguieron con su viaje rumbo al Norte. La ruta fue difícil porque los terrenos eran caminos rocosos. A Mari la metieron hasta abajo de los camiones y le ponían gente encima, entonces cuando los camiones iban rápido, el cuerpo de Mari se golpeaba. Sus caderas quedaron magulladas, y el cuerpo le dolía muchísimo.

Llegó el momento donde ella ya no tenía sentido de dirección, no sabía dónde estaba en ningún momento. El resto del camino fueron momentos de seguir a los guías, y confiar en extraños. Esto no fue todo lo que le pasó, pero para mantener el cuento un poco corto, Mari se escapó de morir, y de ser atrapada unas cuantas veces. Los conductores casi siempre estaban bajo alguna influencia de drogas o alcohol, y ella nunca sabía si iba a llegar viva. El camino estaba lleno de camiones, hoteles, y caminatas.

De acuerdo a estudios hechos sobre la situación de migrantes, las mujeres y los pequeños que deciden tomar el camino hacia los Estados Unidos de la manera que lo hizo Mari, son más probable de ser secuestrados y traficados. Aun así, muchos deciden que es un riesgo que tienen que tomar en búsqueda de mejores oportunidades para ellos y sus familiares. Muchas personas como Mari no se quieren ir de sus patrias, pero a veces no les queda de otra.

Dicho esto, aquellos que migran como Mari, lo hacen porque la ruta legal no es ideal, ni tienen el tiempo ni los ingresos para esperar. El proceso legal tampoco es fácil. Sea la pobreza, la guerra, la extorsión o las amenazas, las razones para huir son válidas y la única opción realista para ellos.

En noticias recientes, el gobernador de Florida, Ron DeSantis, se encuentra actualmente bajo investigación criminal por parte del alguacil del condado de Bexar, Javier Salazar, por fletar el transporte de migrantes de un centro de recursos para migrantes de San Antonio a Massachusetts el 9 de



septiembre.

“Con base en los reclamos de migrantes que son transportados desde el condado de Bexar bajo falsos pretextos, estamos investigando este caso como posible Restricción Ilegal (Código Penal de Texas 20.02). Tenemos sospechosos identificados, sin embargo, en este punto de la investigación, no tenemos la libertad de divulgar esos nombres públicamente o confirmar ninguna identidad. Solo aquellos que se encontraban físicamente en nuestra jurisdicción en el momento del delito son considerados sospechosos. Hemos presentado documentación a través del sistema federal para garantizar la disponibilidad de los migrantes como testigos durante la investigación. Estamos trabajando activamente con la Oficina del Fiscal de Distrito del Condado de Bexar y los abogados que representan a los migrantes. La investigación sigue en curso y publicaremos cualquier actualización que esté disponible”.

Estos intentos de desplazar a los migrantes, incluso a aquellos que están aquí legalmente, aunque sea temporalmente, no son infrecuentes. Los migrantes, que a menudo son solicitantes de asilo, arriesgan sus vidas para vivir una vida mejor, no una peor, llenos del crimen del que pretendían escapar. Sin embargo, los líderes políticos y los legisladores suelen suponer lo contrario.

Mari llegó el 6 de agosto del 2022. Ahora ella vive en Texas con una señora que se llama Argentina, y trabaja en una panadería salvadoreña donde gana \$10 por hora. Comparado a su sueldo en El Salvador, eso es mucho más.

Argentina nos dijo algunas cosas que aprendió de Mari desde que ella llegó a vivir en su casa. “Mari es una mujer de buenos sentimientos, trabajadora, y luchadora de la vida. Ella ha sufrido mucho, y solamente quiere tener la habilidad de poder darle una mejor vida a sus hijos,” dijo Argentina.

El dinero que se gana no es todo de ella porque tiene que pagar el préstamo que sacó, pero por lo menos les pudo mandar más a sus hijos para las necesidades. Ella también puede hablar con sus niños todos los días y lucha día tras día para poder tenerlos junto con ella de nuevo.

Su hija, Alisson, 15, también tuvo unas palabras admirables que decir sobre su mamá. “Mi mamá es muy responsable y muy fuerte. Desde que se enfermó mi papá, mi mamá nunca lo dejó solo, siempre estuvo con él y se hizo cargo de todo,” dijo Alisson. Ella extraña a su mamá, pero sabe que los sacrificios son por el amor que ella les tiene a ella y a su hermano, Jerson, 12.

Mari dice que todavía no se siente como ella misma. Aún le duelen los pies de las caminatas.

Su estómago rechaza la comida. Su mente sufre de pensamientos invasivos y depresión después de todo lo que le ha pasado. Lo único que le importa, dice, es sacar adelante a sus hijos.

Mari terminó diciendo, “Todo para mí viene con deuda, y es tan difícil sentir eso, pero mi meta es pagarlas y poder comprar algo que me pertenezca solamente a mí y a mis niños.”

Y así, ella lucha.



↑
**DESTINY
 CABALLERO**
 Texas A&M
 University-San
 Antonio Student

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

BY ANA JURADO PEDROZA



THE FEELING OF TAKING YOUR FIRST STEPS INTO YOUR NEW HOME AFTER SIGNING THOSE PAPERS,

you waited years for this and after saving for so long you finally own your first house. The process was a breeze but then you remember that it was in the year 2000. As inflation becomes a problem in the United States it could feel like signing your soul to get approved for a home loan, especially for first time buyers. Hoziel Loera, 24, has dreamed about owning a home, not just for him but also his family, as they also struggled in these tough times.

As more new homes are being built around Texas, many young adults like Loera dream about purchasing one and starting the next step into the journey of adulthood. Unfortunately, not everyone was lucky like Loera to be approved for a home, due to the prices of houses in Texas increasing and will continue with inflation going on. Although Loera was fortunate to get approved to purchase a home, the process was not easy for him. He applied for several other homes in the northwest area. Ideally, Loera wanted to find a home in the Alamo Ranch area, but it was out of his budget.

“With inflation and everything being expensive now, it makes it harder for young people looking for a home compared to when our parents bought their first home,” Loera said. “It’s almost like you’re competing for a bid



Photo: Ana Jurado Pedroza

on every home you look at and you usually don’t get it.”

Loera started to feel hopeless that he would not be approved for a home. His intentions in buying a home were to find more space for his family and for each of his brothers to have their own rooms. Growing up, Loera and his brothers have been sharing a room since he was

in middle school. Loera’s parents were renting houses and wanted to purchase a bigger home sooner but did not qualify for a mortgage loan nor could they afford it. Loera’s parents were originally from Mexico and came to the United States with almost little to nothing. They did not have a high school diploma and for years they have been working in the food service





↑
HOZIEL
LOERA

Throughout his teenage years, Loera did not mind sharing a room with his younger brother but felt he needed his own space and privacy as he got older, he also did not enjoy seeing his parents continue to struggle to pay rent. As soon as Loera graduated high school, he went to work for Cisco. While he was in high school, he was in an information technology program for Cisco, and his interest in the company grew. Because he had a good history with Cisco he was hired as a fiber optic installer. Loera's duties involved going to new refurbished homes and installing cables and wires for future internet installation.

Loera has been with Cisco since 2016 and has been saving up for a house since then. Even after saving up for six years, Loera did not have enough for a down payment due to increased mortgage rates, so he decided to apply for a second job. He got a part-time job as a manager for a gas station Subway on his weekends off. After three months with Subway, he was finally able to qualify for a home loan in August 2022.

With the help of Loera's close friend Sergio Gomez, Gomez got him in touch with a realtor who helped him get a home as well. Gomez was in a similar situation as Loera, Gomez wanted to find a better home for his family, his parents also moved from Mexico, but they were fortunate enough to afford a house while Gomez was growing up. "It was easier for my parents to buy a home when I was younger because they bought one during the recession," Gomez said. Gomez's family wanted a bigger home, because Gomez and his parents together made a larger income, they were able to put a down payment for a home in 2021. "It depends on your income, how much you make is how much they're going to give you." Gomez said. "Different places give you a higher interest or lower interest."

Loera and Gomez talked about owning homes of their own since they were in high school and couldn't wait to hold that key to the door of their first house. But due to inflation, the prices of homes have increased which made the process of purchasing a home for both Loera and Gomez long and difficult. Both are first time homeowners, so the process wasn't easy but after seeing the success of his friend

purchasing a home, Loera decided to give the realtor that helped Gomez out a call.

Silvia Solis has been in the real estate business for eight years. She works for Remax Real Estate company. Her mission was to help find Loera a home at an affordable price. Solis and Loera started the process in January 2022, and they narrowed it down to three options on the market, two homes in the northwest area, and one in the Alamo Ranch area. Being a first-time buyer during this time was difficult, there has been a decrease in home mortgages in Texas. The Texas A&M University Real Estate Research Center reports there was a 9.4% decrease of home sales this year compared to 2021. Solis also noticed the increased rates have made it difficult for first-time buyers to purchase a home. "I have noticed a decrease in first time and second time buyers, in general, because the market has gone up," Solis said.

The requirements to purchase a home can be critical, they are to ensure that clients are able to manage their payments. According to Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate, to qualify for a home mortgage in Texas, the basic requirements are a steady or decent credit score, which in Texas the average is about 656. Proof of income, and in most cases a certain amount of income, a down payment, and a pre-approved letter, which is a letter stating the money you are opening a loan to purchase the house. Inflation has made it difficult to purchase a home, although it would be an advantage for first-time buyers and the middle and lower class to ease the requirements, process and fees, it would become a disadvantage for the market as they will lose money.

Texas was one of the affordable states to live in the United States. In 2000, the median price for a house in Texas was \$119,600 and has increased to \$392,900. California has become one of the most expensive states to live in the United States, with an average mortgage rate between \$800,000 to \$900,000. Due to the increase of home prices in California, California residents have moved to Texas for the affordable home rates, within time this has also caused an increase in Texas mortgage rates. The minimum wage in California is \$15, this becomes an advantage for California residents when saving

industry. They worked hard to provide a roof for their only son but as their family grew so did their expenses. Loera's parents had to make do with what they had for their three sons. When Loera's mother found out she was pregnant with her third son, they moved out of their two-bedroom apartment and rented a three-bedroom home.



Photo: Ana Jurado Pedroza

money to move to Texas as they are able to put larger down payments for a home. “When they come to Texas, they can pay more than the value in the market,” Solis said. “They are trying to compete with people working in Texas with a regular income and they come with money in their pockets, they are able to pay more so the options that Texans have are limited.”

Loera was worried about the increased mortgage rates or someone putting a higher down payment than his. His options were narrowed down to one home on the northwest side. He was competing with two other buyers, Loera was concerned about losing his potential

home because he was only aware of how much his down payment was not the others, so there was no way of making a higher offer. Loera waited about a week to hear the final decision. It wasn’t until August 2022 he found out he was approved for the house. He was relieved, not only would he be able to give his family a bigger home, but to own a house at an affordable price than what he was expecting.

Loera was fortunate enough to find a home, but the process was still difficult. In the beginning, Loera was hesitant to start the process because he felt he would not qualify because of the rates increasing. Although inflation is a big issue in the United States, that

should not be a discouragement to investigate the market. According to Quicken Loans “If you wait to buy, inflation might continue to rise even higher, dragging home prices and mortgage interest rates with it.” The best time to buy a home is when an individual can afford it. Solis recommends first time buyers to educate themselves about the market, the home buying process and partner with professionals for a smooth process. The Texas Homebuyers Program offers more information about the process and steps before buying a home. “Get information, work with a professional, don’t try to do this by yourself, the process is easier when you contact a professional.” Solis said.



RECLAIMING THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

BY ELIZABETH LOPEZ



**ECLUDED AND
TUCKED AWAY ON THE
NORTHEAST SIDE OF
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS,**

there's a magical place near Salado Creek. Surrounded by charming architecture and green trees that fill the alluring 18-acre property, Los Patios is not your typical marketplace. This place has so much history and has been around for about 50 years, however, it has only been a sober property since 2021, meaning all businesses on the premises are drug and alcohol-free.

Christina Valera, CEO of Blue Heron Recovery, explained why this beautiful spot became a sober space for recovering outpatients.

Blue Heron Recovery is one of the many establishments on Los Patios, but it's the reason this sober space exists now. There are eight other buildings and a few projects in the works for some of the vacant spaces, but the places that are open for business are collectively working towards promoting one thing: sobriety.

One of the places on the property is Comfort Café, serving up brunch mainly on the weekends.

"Comfort Café is fantastic – they were our first restaurant tenant," Valera said.

The "pay what you can" restaurant, has a large following because of the food and the abundant portions customers receive.



Photo: Elizabeth Lopez

“The drunk monkey makes me so happy, it’s like everything you could possibly add to an omelet,” said Valera.

Prior to taking an order, the waitstaff asks customers if they have been there before, if they say no, they briefly explain how the restaurant uses its earnings. Comfort Café and the coffee shop inside called Java Junkie only take cash and suggest \$10-\$15 per entrée. All of the profits go back to their support group organization called Serenity Star in Smithville, Texas.

Serenity Star is non-profit and donation-based, they are not connected to Blue Heron Recovery. They are very different from one another, but they share the same objective. Serenity Star has a peer-to-peer recovery community, and the folks that go to that location live together.

“They keep each other sober and they work in the restaurant, and through the restaurant, they support their mission of keeping people sober,” Valera said.

They are not a treatment center, although Valera says they are “quite fortunate” at Los Patios to have Comfort Cafe as a part of the community because it’s “the same love and light and support in all of the staying sober craziness that we do.”

Naco 210 is another restaurant on the sober property serving up all-day chilaquiles among other Mexican cuisines. If you look at the menu, you might agree with Valera when she says “they make the best food that was passed down from one of the owner’s grandfather’s recipes.”

Olla Express is a coffee shop specializing in cafe de olla which has different ingredients that consist of cinnamon and piloncillo. Piloncillo is a traditional non-refined sugar from Mexico that gives their coffee a distinct taste.

Pure Prana Path is a yoga studio and outpatients of Blue Heron are also encouraged to use this peaceful studio before, during, or even after their recovery graduation.

Blue Heron Recovery provides programs and group sessions throughout the day for their recovering outpatients to fit early or late schedules.

“The idea is community, and our folks could go for walks around Los Patios, or they could go



to yoga, so if for example, they get used to going to yoga and then they transition out of the program because they’ve graduated after eight or twelve weeks, or they’ve decided that they’re done, they can still go to the same yoga studio, they can still have lunch at Comfort Café, they can still make friends and be involved, without feeling the pressure,” Valera explains.

All of the businesses are accessible through the sidewalks that surround the property. Some areas have benches and there’s one spot that has a gazebo in the center of all the businesses. When businesses are closed, outpatients are the only ones allowed on the premises.

“This is very important for a place like this because we have a medical clinic with licensed counselors,” said Valera.

In order to meet the state’s requirements, Blue Heron Recovery has certain rules and regulations to follow so they can keep their doors open for their community and the private outpatient chemical dependency program. It’s also very important to Valera and the team to show the outpatients respect by supervising and protecting their privacy.

Valera and the team at Blue Heron Recovery were at an inpatient place right outside of San Antonio, Texas, one day, and she described inpatient facilities as places that come with “all the bells and whistles.” They tend to be places that are quiet, and serene, and they have trained counselors, nurses, and doctors that tend to them all day. Once inpatients are done with their treatment, some normally head to an outpatient program that is “tragically different.”

This is how Valera and the Blue Heron Recovery team reclaimed the road to recovery. They wanted to give outpatients something that gave them the same feelings that inpatient facilities gave them before they left. People that are trying to stay sober need support and peacefulness, and it’s hard to disengage when they go back home after treatment and something triggers them.

When we asked Valera the success rate of Blue Heron, she laughed and said, “I hate this question, but I’m glad you’re asking, I have no idea.”

The reason why she hates this question is because she doesn’t believe in a number or





Photo: Elizabeth Lopez

percentage as far as success rates go. She does not understand how you can quantify something like sobriety. What she can tell us is that last year she had about 140 outpatients and a few dozen of them still come back to high-five them and self-report their sobriety. Valera and the group of counselors at Blue Heron are very tight-knit and keep a very close eye on all of their outpatients. Blue Heron also offers scholarship programs for outpatients that may not be able to afford the

treatment.

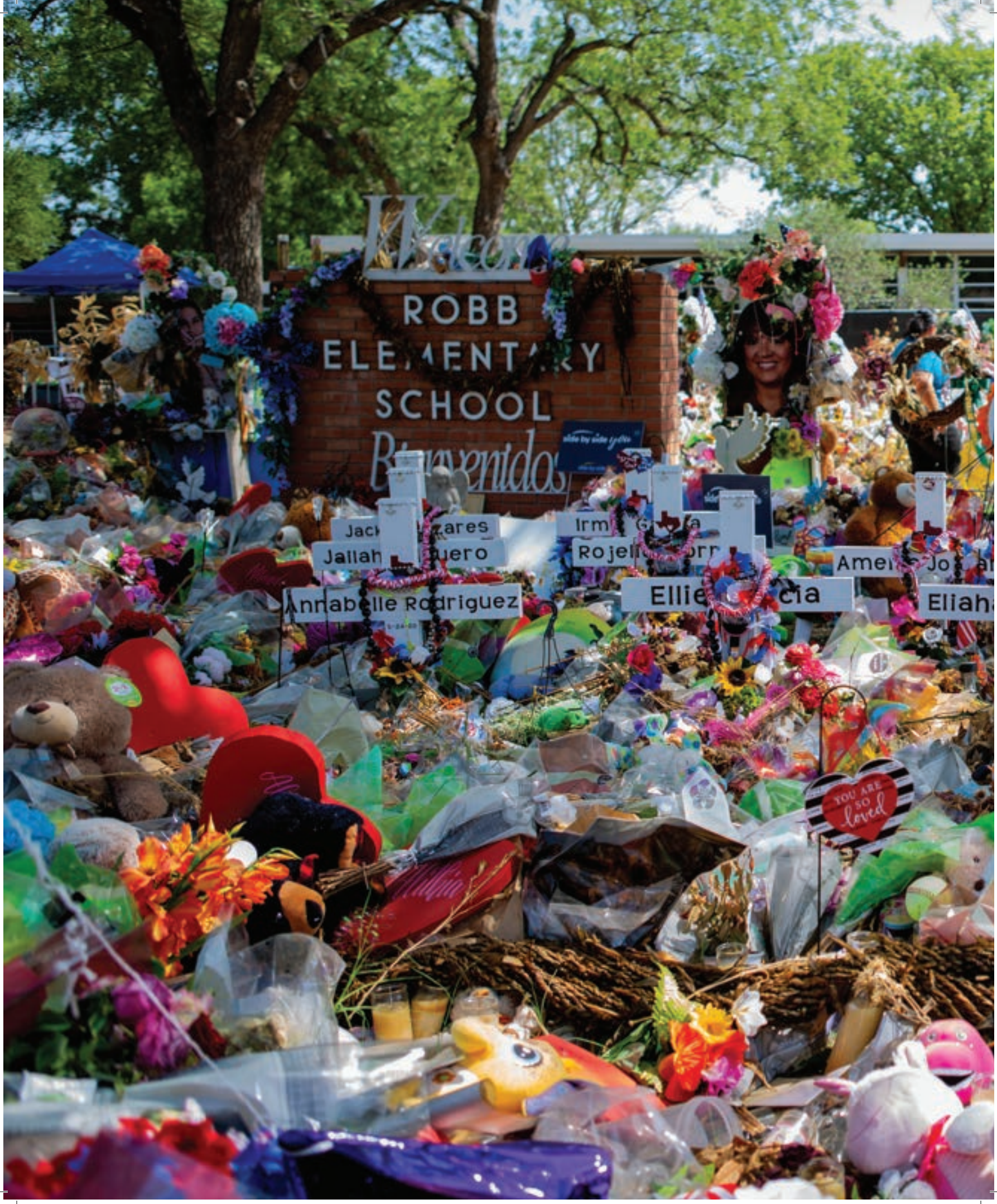
Not having that place that offers them the tranquility and community they used to have at the inpatient facility can sometimes result in relapsing. Blue Heron Recovery found a home at Los Patios. Its large acreage with many trees that are accompanied by a creek and some wildlife made it the perfect place for an outpatient program like the one Valera wanted to create. The sense of community and the ability to engage with the public during sober festivals and

celebrations really allows Los Patios to stand out in the city of San Antonio, Texas.

If you or someone you know is struggling with drug and alcohol addiction, don't be afraid to seek help.

Haley, a counselor at Blue Heron said, "Take action now because your life is worth it!"

Valera added, "Addiction thrives in isolation. Recovery requires community. Your recovery community is here for you!"



Welcome
ROBB
ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL
Bienvenidos

Jack
Jallah
Annabelle Rodriguez

Irma
Rojella

Ellie
Elia

America
Jo
Eliah

YOU ARE
SO
loved