

TODAY

HIGH 97
LOW 78
 Chance of T-storms

SATURDAY

HIGH 100
LOW 78
 Chance of T-storms

VALLEY MORNING STAR

HARLINGEN

Opioid overdoses on the rise locally.
Page A3



NATION

Friends call John McCain hero, maverick
Page A7



SPORTS

Rio Hondo takes on La Joya
Page B1



Friday, August 31, 2018 | © 2018 valleystar.com \$1.50 Sunday • 75¢ Daily

VACATION FLIGHT



Southwest adds seasonal, Spring Break service

By RICK KELLEY
 Staff Writer

HARLINGEN — Southwest Airlines yesterday announced a slew of new seasonal nonstop flights between Dallas/Love Field and Valley International Airport.

Southwest has added 17 extra flights that will operate nonstop between Harlingen and Dallas/Love Field during high demand days for Thanksgiving and Christmas 2018.

Also, airline officials announced that beginning March 10, Southwest will offer nonstop flights between Harlingen and Dallas/Love Field to provide passenger service for Spring Break. The airport has a shuttle service to South Padre Island.

See FLIGHT ★ A8

New Southwest flights

Southwest Airlines also revealed a number of new domestic and international flights from U.S. gateways which can be found at its website, www.southwest.com



RICK KELLEY/VALLEY MORNING STAR
 Southwest Airlines has announced a raft of new flights to Valley International Airport to accommodate passengers over the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. In March, the airline is going to offer Sunday flights for Spring Break attendees to and from Chicago O'Hare Airport.



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

President Donald Trump waves to members of the media as he walks toward Marine One at the White House in Washington.

No pay raises for feds

Trump cancels hikes due to federal workers in January

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE
 The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump is canceling pay raises due in January for most civilian federal employees, he informed Congress on Thursday, citing budget constraints.

But the workers still could see a slightly smaller boost in their pay under a proposal lawmakers are considering.

Trump said he was nixing a 2.1 percent across-the-board raise for most workers as well as separate locality pay increases averaging 25.7 percent.

"We must maintain efforts to put our Nation on a fiscally sustainable course, and Federal agency budgets cannot sustain such increases," said Trump. The president last year signed a package of tax cuts that is forecast to add about \$1.5 trillion to federal deficits over 10 years.

Trump cited the "significant" cost of employing federal workers as justification for denying the

See HEARING ★ A8

See RAISES ★ A8

Judge again resets Willacy game room hearing

The Silver Express Amusement located at P106 North U.S. 77 in Sebastian, Texas.
 Staff photo



By FERNANDO DEL VALLE
 Staff Writer

BROWNSVILLE — Another delay.

For the second time in 10 days, a judge reset the case of four Sebastian game room owners asking to continue operating their businesses despite a tough new Willacy County ordinance that shut them down.

Yesterday, state District Judge Migdalia Lopez reset the hearing for

Sept. 4 after attorney Ricardo Morado, representing the county, requested time to review amended arguments filed late Wednesday by the owners of the game rooms.

Lopez has said she will hear the merits, or facts, of the case.

The game rooms are demanding the county pay damages of \$50,000 to \$2 million.

See HEARING ★ A8

UTRGV welcomes international students

By NADIA TAMEZ-ROBLEDO
 Staff Writer

BROWNSVILLE — UTRGV welcomed its international students back to the Brownsville campus yesterday with a bang. Or rather, a band.

The Office of Global Engagement invited the marching band and drill team of Preparatoria Ricardo Flores Mason in Matamoros to help kick off the International Meet and Greet.

It was a decision that Director Samantha Lopez said demonstrates the

friendship with Brownsville's sister city.

The university will serve 750 international students from 69 countries during the fall semester, she added, with 75 percent of them coming from Mexico.

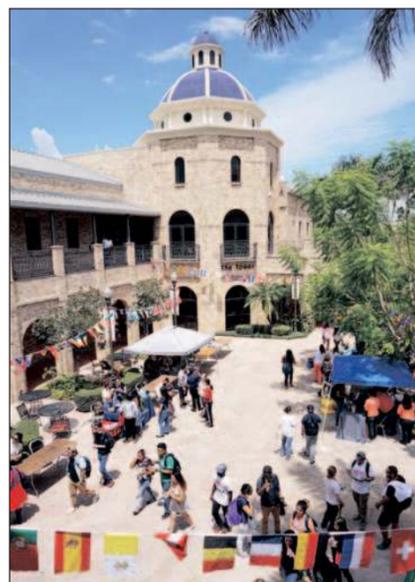
"It's the signature event of the Best Week Ever, which is a week full of events for our incoming students, new and returning ones," Lopez said. "We want to make them feel like they're home."

See UTRGV ★ A8



PHOTOS BY MIGUEL ROBERTS/THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD

Students at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Brownsville campus played games and bonded during International Meet and Greet.



Dozens of students made it out during the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley's International Meet and Greet yesterday at the Brownsville campus.

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Today's Page 1 Editor
Victor Cerda

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UTRGV

FROM A1

She said the university hosts international student outings, provides specialized advising and annually holds over 20 cultural events. Those include celebrations for International Education Week in November, Thanksgiving and Lunar New Year.

Staff at the International Meet and Greet also hosted games and provided information about study abroad programs.

Attracting international students benefits not only those who come from abroad to attend UTRGV, Lopez said, but domestic students, as well. “We want our domestic students to learn from other cultures, and the international students enrich the student population with their customs, their food and their culture,” she said.

Guldauren Bissenbayeva, 21, came to Brownsville from Kazakhstan to work on her master’s degree in science. She was interested in the research of a UTRGV professor, and a professor in her undergraduate physics program recommended she study at the campus.

So far, Bissenbayeva said, the people she has met have been nice and helpful. She was



By MIGUEL ROBERTS/THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD

Escuela Preparatoria Por Cooperacion Ricardo Flores Magon Banda De Musica from Matamoros, Mexico performed as special guest yesterday at the International Meet and Greet event at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley campus in Brownsville.

surprised to learn how many people at the university speak Spanish.

“I really like the palms,” she said of the campus. “I feel like I’m on vacation. Maybe I will feel more like a student when the classes start tomorrow.”

Jing Luo, who recently graduated with his PhD in physics, came to the university from China eight years ago when it was still the University of Texas at Brownsville/ Texas Southmost College. He was interested in the research of a professor he met while still in China and figured he could collaborate via email. Luo said the professor encouraged him to apply to the university.

One of the biggest

impacts in time in Brownsville was speaking English, he said, because learning a new language also taught him a new, Western way of thinking. Lou said he had to adjust to the city’s reliance on cars and found there was plenty to explore for people who had the willingness to find local events.

“I think it’s the most important eight years of my life,” he said. “I came (as) an immature undergraduate student, and I became a very mature adult. Maybe I can say I became part of Texas. I like eating barbecue and fixing cars like a Texan.”

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RAISES

FROM A1

pay increases, and called for federal worker pay to be based on performance and structured toward recruiting, retaining and rewarding “high-performing Federal employees and those with critical skill sets.”

His announcement came as the country heads into the Labor Day holiday weekend.

Democrats immediately criticized the move, citing the tax cuts Trump signed into law last December. That law provided steep tax cuts for corporations and the wealthiest Americans, and more modest reductions for middle- and low-income individuals and families.

“Trump has delivered yet another slap in the face to American workers,” said Democratic National Committee Chairman Tom Perez.

Under the law, the 2.1

percent raise takes effect automatically unless the president and Congress act to change it. Congress is currently debating a proposal for a slightly lower, 1.9 percent across-the-board raise to be included in a funding bill that would require Trump’s signature to keep most government functions operating past September.

Unions representing the 2 million-member federal workforce urged Congress to pass the 1.9 percent pay raise.

“President Trump’s plan to freeze wages for these patriotic workers next year ignores the fact that they are worse off today financially than they were at the start of the decade,” said J. David Cox Sr., president of the American Federation of Government Employees, which represents some 700,000 federal workers.

“They have already endured years of little to no increases and their

paychecks cannot stretch any further as education, health care costs, gas and other goods continue to get more expensive,” added Tim Reardon, national president of the National Treasury Employees Union.

Cox said federal worker pay and benefits have been cut by more than \$200 billion since 2011.

Congress has approved legislation to give military service members a 2.6 percent pay raise, the biggest in nine years.

In July, the Trump administration sharply revised upward its deficit estimates compared to the estimates in the budget proposal it sent Congress in February. The worsening deficit reflects the impact of the \$1.5 trillion, 10-year tax cut, as well as increased spending for the military and domestic programs that Congress approved earlier this year.

FLIGHT

FROM A1

These Sunday flights will depart from Dallas to Harlingen at 11:35 a.m. and arrive at 1:10 p.m. The Harlingen-Dallas flight departs at 1:45 p.m. and arrives at 3:20 p.m.

“These new nonstop flights to Dallas, in addition to the current nonstop flights to Austin and Houston/ Hobby, will offer Rio Grande Valley travelers more options of connecting cities on the Southwest network,” Marv Esterly, director of aviation at Valley International, said yesterday.

The announcement of the new Southwest flights to Harlingen adds to an extraordinary week for Valley International. On Tuesday, officials announced a new air passenger carrier,

Frontier Airlines, would begin nonstop flights to and from Harlingen to Stapleton International Airport in Denver and to and from Chicago O’Hare Airport.

Those flights will begin in November. Currently providing air passenger service in and out of Valley International are Southwest, United Airlines, Delta Airlines and Sun Country Airlines.

Valley International also is an air cargo hub for DHL, FedEx and Southwest Cargo.

Earlier this month, airport officials announced the airport’s biggest project since 1990, a \$15.5 million upgrade to replace 1930s-era concrete on taxiways and aircraft parking areas.

In May the airport opened a state-of-the-

art, \$3.8 million aircraft fire and rescue facility. The airport is currently undergoing a \$1.2 million project to rip out the original late 1980s ceramic tile in the terminal building and replacing it with blue and gray epoxy terrazzo.

“The terminal’s new flooring should be in place for the start-up of these extra flights and, in addition, we have other improvement projects coming up that will benefit our traveling public,” Esterly said.

The airport also added new air chillers and fan coil units, a new HVAC system which has cut utility costs by 30 percent and new LED lighting. A new roof is coming next year.

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HEARING

FROM A1

Game rooms’ arguments

During yesterday’s hearing, Robert Flores, an attorney representing the Silver Star Game Room, Silver Express Game Room, La Victoria Game Room and the Silver Outpost, argued the new county ordinance denied his clients “due process.”

In court documents, Flores argued the game rooms were lawfully operating when they were shut down after the county approved the ordinance last February.

The ordinance, which allows game rooms to re-apply for permits to operate eight-liner machines, failed to fairly administer the process with which to re-apply for those permits, Flores argued.

As part of that process, the Sheriff’s Department reviewed game room applications to determine whether to grant permits.

Factors leading to denials include game rooms’ code violations, any owners’ or employees’ criminal histories and failure to properly complete the applications.

After the Sheriff’s Department review, the county allowed three game rooms to reopen while denying 11 applications.

Of those 11, six game rooms appealed the

decisions before a hearing examiner appointed as part of the ordinance.

In June, hearing examiner Richard Solis, a retired justice of the peace, denied the six appeals.

Flores is arguing the county failed to give his clients notice of any “deficiencies” that may have led to their applications being denied.

“Plaintiffs received no notice of any kind of the technical deficiency in their application as required under the ordinance,” the La Victoria Game Room argued in a document filed Wednesday.

Flores also argued Solis “blocked” his clients’ amended applications.

County’s response

Meanwhile, the county accused the game room owners of “a false representation or concealment of material facts,” arguing they have “no viable claim for damages.”

The county plans to “show it is immune to any action for intentional torts, including business disparagement,” Morado wrote in a response to the game room owners’ arguments filed Wednesday.

How we got here

On Aug. 13, the four game room owners asked Lopez to grant

their request for temporary restraining orders.

In response, Lopez allowed the game rooms to reopen until she hands down her ruling.

In Willacy County, the court battle is blazing new legal territory.

For years, many residents have called for an ordinance to control the spread of eight-liner arcades across the county’s vast unincorporated areas.

With the new ordinance, law enforcement has the authority to inspect game rooms for violations.

Under the ordinance, game rooms cited for violations will be required to shut down.

Sheriff Larry Spence said even building code violations might be enough to force some to close.

Under the ordinance, game rooms face \$10,000 fines for each violation.

The ordinance requires game rooms to limit operations between 10 a.m. and 11 p.m. Sundays through Thursdays and from 10 a.m. to 1 a.m. on Fridays and Sunday mornings.

Meanwhile, the ordinance requires new eight-liner arcades to be located at least 5,000 feet from other game rooms, on frontage property with direct access to highways.

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