



BUSINESS

Official Publication of the Alice Chamber of Commerce

business

tradition

service

community

agriculture

oil & gas

growth

Chamber/EDC hosting Open House

**Tuesday
December 22nd**

**2 - 4 p.m.
Chamber of
Commerce**

The Alice Chamber of Commerce, Convention & Visitors Bureau and Alice Jim Wells County Economic Development welcome the Alice community to an Open House

on Tuesday, December 22, 2009 from 2 - 4 p.m. at the Chamber.

Last year, more than 30 Alice Chamber of Commerce members and friends attended the Open House.

Guests were welcomed by board members of both the Chamber and EDC.

"We had a great turnout last year and expect a bigger one this year," Chamber director Juan Navejar said. "We have made some changes in the lobby and visitor's center and want to share our new look with the community."

The goal of the Chamber/CVB and EDC is create a positive economic image to our community. All three agencies provide services that can benefit many.

The Chamber provides services to its members which include free use of its conference room, electrical service discounts, advertising opportunities and referrals to name a few.

The CVB's role is to promote Alice and the area to all who are inquiring about the Hub City. The CVB offers both city/county and state maps, brochures of the area, South Texas and the Lone Star State

OPEN HOUSE, From Page 7

Christmas arrives in Hub City



Alice Mayor Dr. Rito Silva Jr. welcomes the crowd prior to officially turning on the lights of downtown and kicking off the parade.

Old man winter brought the North Pole South to the Hub City as the 28th Annual Christmas Parade made its way to downtown Alice.

Cold rain postponed the annual parade one night. Despite the delay the crowds still flocked downtown the following night to await the lighting of downtown and await the arrival of Santa Claus officially kicking off the Holiday Season.

Alice Mayor Dr. Rito Silva Jr. and City Council members led the parade stopping at Heldt Park to turn on the City Christmas lights and getting the

parade underway.

"I am glad we waited one night for this as this is much better weather," Alice Mayor Dr. Rito Silva told the crowd as he welcomed everyone to the parade. "On behalf of the city, we welcome the official start of the holiday season in Alice."

And with that, the lights were lit after a count down, opening the streets of Alice to the parade.

More than 50 units bared the cold

See PARADE, Page 14

2009

Chamber Leadership

Executive Committee

Gap Alaniz

President

First Community Bank

Yvette Johnson

Immediate Past President/VP-CVB

Individual Member

Virginia Garcia

V.P. AJWC-EDC President Elect

WorkForce Solutions of the Coastal Bend

Nena Pitts

V.P. - Membership

CHRISTUS Spohn Hospital Alice

Rito Silva

V.P. - Civic

Coastal Bend College

Hector Hinojosa

Treasurer

City of Alice

Board of Directors

Mark Alaniz

Love Chrysler Jeep of Alice

Dee Dee Arismendez

Home Interior Ind. Contractor

Mark Casanova

CHRISTUS Spohn Alice

Lawrence Cornelius

Century 21

Michael Day

Individual Member

Servando Garza

Coym, Rhemet & Associates

J.R. Gonzalez

Wells Fargo Bank

R. David Guerrero

JWC Dist. Clerk

Robert Molina

State Farm Insurance - Robert Molina

Mirka Pena

Dixie Iron Works/MSI

Ex-Officio

Ray De Los Santos

City of Alice

Staff

Juan A. Navejar Jr.

Chamber Director

Veronica Castillo

Administrative Assistant

From the Chamber



Where has the year gone! Hard to believe my tenure as board president will come to an close at the end of the month. It has been a great and exciting year for the Chamber.

We had our first golf tournament which had not occurred in a while with great success. Our Second Annual Skeet Shoot brought some new faces and groups to Alice. Those two events along with the annual banquet brought some additional revenue to the Chamber for its day-to-day operations.

Our Mixers have been well attended this year with five of them being hosted by various members. Our final one of the year will be on December 17th at the new Alice Heart and Vascular Center. We invite all our members to attend this one. This will also serve as an Open House for the Heart Center's new building. Bring your business cards and network by promoting your business.

Just a reminder to our members, the 2010 Investment statements went out by email and mail last month. We rely on your investment dues for our day-to-day operations. Without your investments, the Chamber cannot function.

If you did not attend the Annual Parade you missed a great one despite the cold weather. Great job to the Chamber staff and the City of Alice for putting on the parade.

Don't forget the Chamber will have an Open House on Tuesday, December 15th from 2-4 p.m. Come out and meet our board members and staff.

Merry Christmas all. Remember to Shop Alice this Holiday Season.

Agapito "Gap" Alaniz Jr., Chamber Board President



DJ's Saloon held a grand opening ceremony on Monday, November 4, 2009. The new establishment is located six miles north of Alice on Hwy 359 and is owned by Balboa family.

FTC: BlueHippo business model is “Built on Deceit”

Last week, the Federal Trade Commission asked a federal court to [issue a contempt order](#) against Maryland-based BlueHippo Funding, LLC for violating a court ordered settlement issued in April 2008. BBB serving Central, Coastal and Southwest Texas first alerted consumers to this computer dealer in a [press release](#) on May 8, 2009. Since then, 12 additional consumers in the local area have filed complaints against BlueHippo.

In a [statement released by the FTC](#), Chairman Joe Leibowitz stated, “We’re putting companies like this on notice: If you mistreat consumers and thumb your nose at the courts, we will hold you accountable.”

BlueHippo claims to provide an alternative for people with limited financing options, such as poor or no credit, to own expensive items like computers. Consumers across the country complain the company does not deliver merchandise on time, does not provide a contract, denies refunds and makes unauthorized withdrawals to their bank accounts.

“According to BBB records, Blue

Hippo has targeted a vulnerable group of consumers with poor credit and taken advantage of them,” said Carrie A. Hurt, President and CEO of BBB serving Central, Coastal and Southwest Texas. “BBB supports the Federal Trade Commission’s efforts to stop BlueHippo and hold them accountable.”

In the past 36 months, BBB has received 4,145 complaints about BlueHippo, and the company has failed to respond to any complaint filed since February 2009. Click [here](#) to view BlueHippo’s current BBB Reliability Report™.

The company has a BBB rating of F due to failure to comply with an arbitration decision or mediation settlement, failure to respond to 2,516 complaints, the company’s overall complaint history and past government action taken by The Attorneys General in Maryland, West Virginia and Illinois.

Consumers like Kim Becerra of San Antonio continue to be out substantial amounts of money.

“I still don’t have a computer,” said Becerra. “I filed a complaint with my bank to get my money back, but BlueHippo denied the refund.”

BBB offers the following tips when ordering items by phone or online:

- ◆ · **Protect your private information.** When shopping online, look for the retailer’s Web site privacy policy and never provide your Social Security number, birth date, or mother’s maiden name.
- ◆ · **Don’t wait for paper statements.** Check your credit card and bank statements for suspicious activity by calling your bank or visiting your financial institution’s Web site.
- ◆ · **Check the company’s refund policies.** Some merchants set a deadline for returns or charge a fee to accept returned merchandise.
- ◆ · **Pay with a credit or debit card.** For extra protection enroll your card in anti-fraud programs.

To check the reliability of a company, visit www.bbb.org.

USDA gets \$35 million for distance learning

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that 111 projects in 35 states have been selected to receive more than \$34.9 million in grants that will increase educational opportunities and access to health care services in rural areas. The funding will be provided through USDA Rural Development’s Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program. Five projects in Texas have been selected to receive \$1,443,395.

“The Obama Administration is working to ensure that rural citizens have access to a full range of educational opportunities and access to quality medical care,” Vilsack said. “The funding we are announcing today will deliver these opportunities by expanding telecommunications, educational resources and computer networks throughout rural communities.”

The Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Grant Program provides access to education, training and health care resources in rural areas. Funding is

contingent upon the recipient meeting the conditions of the grant agreement. These funds are part of USDA’s annual budget and are not part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

“Schools and health care providers in rural Texas have increasingly tighter budgets. Grants such as these are powerful tools for providing expanded edu-

cational and health care opportunities which otherwise may be unavailable,” Paco Valentin, USDA Rural Development State Director of Texas said

Coastal Bend College will receive \$193,786 to enable their Distance Learning and Allied Health Training Project to high schools located in Benavides, Karnes City, Pettus, Skidmore and Woodsboro.

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Alice Ambassadors

Melva Alegria
Dee Dee Arismendez
Nettie Cornelius
Michael De Leon
Manuel Galindo (Life Member)
Albert Gonzales
Cynthia Hinojosa
Melissa Jaramillo
Debbie Micallef
Bruce Menking
Tem Miller
Rachel Munoz
Dene Murphey
Delma Palacios
Nena Pitts (Life Member)
David Silva
Margaret Smith (Life Member)
Marisela Saenz
Mellie Smithwick
Clare Wonders

Emeritus
Joe Ash
Ralph Gomez
Pedro Jasso
Johnny Rivera



Did you know the Chamber/CVB has... Maps, brochures, phone books, info on attractions and other cities.

ALICE AMBASSADORS

It's December - wasn't that a nice Christmas Parade. Once again the Chamber staff and the City of Alice did a great job with the decorating of Downtown and the annual parade. The Chamber did a great job in organizing the parade and the city with the decorating. Great job all.

December means shopping, shopping and shopping. Alice stores have some great bargains. Contact the Chamber for a list of its members who can provide you with great savings. Shop Alice First this Holiday Season.

Congratulations to the new Alice Ambassador officers. I will remain as president for one more year and will be joined by Bruce Menking as vice president, Margaret Smith remains as treasurer and Debbie Micallef joins as secretary. Officers will serve a one-year term beginning in January.

We invite everyone the Open House at the Chamber on Tuesday, Dec. 15th from 2 - 4 p.m. and the Chamber Mixer on Thursday, Dec. 17th from 5:30 - 7 p.m. at the Alice Heart and Vascular Center.

We still have some spots available in the Ambassadors. If you are a Chamber member and would like to be represented contact one of the Ambassadors for more information. We would love to have you be a part of this active group.

Rachel Munoz

2009 Alice Ambassador President



Our Mission

The mission of the Alice Chamber of Commerce is to promote the economic and community development in Alice, Jim Wells County and the surrounding trade area.



- Production Testing
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- Pressure Transient Analyses



Corporate Headquarters
1000 FESCO Avenue
Alice, Texas 78332
361-664-3479
www.fescoinc.com

City breaks ground on \$2.8 million project

Alice residents will soon see an upgrade in their water systems with the replacements of water main lines.

With the coined motto "Alice Moving Forward" Alice City Mayor Dr. Rito Silva spoke about the improvements of the city during a ground breaking ceremony at the Homer Dean Jr. Water Treatment Plant. Mayor Silva praised both the present and past city councils for their dedication to laying the groundwork for improvements.

"It's a great time to be on the council," he said. "We have to thank both the present but those who came before us and laid the groundwork to pass the bonds."

Funding for the \$2.8 million Waterline Upgrade project was approved during the 2007 \$9.6 million bond election. The Texas Boulevard project is all ready underway with some of the behind the scene workings being done at the plant.

State Representative Yvonne Gonzalez-Tourelles also spoke at the ceremony as she recognized the efforts being made by the city.

"Infrastructure improvements such as this is an investment in our community," she said. "This particular one will help improve the quality of life for families in Alice."

Alice City Manager Ray De Los Santos Jr. reminded residents to be patient when it comes to the work being done on Texas Blvd.



On hand for the ceremony were Jim Wells County Commissioner Ventura Garcia, Justice of the Peace Juan Rodriguez, William Findley, Councilwoman Yvette Johnson, State Representative Yvonne Gonzalez-Tourelles, Alice Mayor Dr. Rito Silva Jr., City Engineer Monty Winter and Alice City Manager Ray De Los Santos Jr.

"We will see some traffic and we ask everyone to be patient as work begins as well as when we have to cross 44 and the railroads," De Los Santos said. "It will just take a little patience from everyone

in the community to cooperate while the project is going on."

Estimated completion of the project is December 2010.



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Congressional Democrats introduce dropout legislation

U.S. Rep. Rubén Hinojosa (TX-15) along with other Democratic Members of Congress on the Education and Labor Committee, introduced critical legislation to address the high school dropout crisis. Nationwide, about 7,000 high school students drop out every day. Only about 70 percent of students, across the nation, now graduate from high school with a regular diploma.

This legislation creates a new \$2 Billion competitive grant program to improve the nation's lowest performing high schools and middle schools.

"Our nation's "dropout factories" pose one of the greatest threats to our nation's growth and competitiveness. "The Graduation for All Act of 2009" builds on "The Graduation Promise Act" to address the high school dropout crisis by investing in our nation's lowest performing middle and high schools", said Hinojosa.

This legislation would provide school districts clear guidelines on turn around strategies. It will combine rigorous coursework with academic and social support services to encourage students and keep them engaged in school. It will also help schools implement a data system to allow teachers and other school staff to identify students who are at risk

See HINOJOSA Page 11

FROM OUR MEMBERS



Pictured are members of the TAMUK Omega Delta Phi, board member, Deborah Dohoney and Mr. Newell Atkinson.

Members of the TAMUK Omega Delta Phi Fraternity worked hard in early November to post three new signs in Alice for Brush Country CASA.

Newell Atkinson, owner of the property, graciously allowed the signs to be posted at the corner of Flournoy and Hwy. 44 and at the west entrance to Wal-Mart.

The Omega Delta Phi National Or-

ganization has selected CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) as their charity to support. Many thanks to the Members for their assistance and Mr. Atkinson's generosity for the property and feeding all the Omega Delta Phi guys afterwards.

For information about becoming a CASA volunteer contact: Seana Towler 595.7233

Byron W. Blair, P.C.

Certified Public Accountant

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They offer the best solution for keeping the associated costs down for having employees.

You will enjoy keeping costs down, while still maintaining 100 percent of the control and direction of your employees and your company.

You can run your operation without the worry of hiring attorneys for employee issues or professionals to help with employee handbook policies, hiring risk management groups or safety programs, or having to hire a PHR (a Professional in Human Resources).

The pool is a great place to be, especially in today's economy. With the PEO arrangement, you lose absolutely no control of your business or employees. Actually with the help of your assigned Professional in Human Resources you have more control as you now have a trained HR staff to assist you with employees attitude, morale, disciplinary plans of action, bonus programs and other pay incentives that provide a ROI, job descriptions, and a myriad of other services.

You'll get more bang for your buck,

with a quality employee program you retain key employees, have a more productive workforce, etc.

With a professional by your side, you no longer have to put up with employee nonsense and how to progressively appropriately discipline your employees. Your PHR will advise you on getting maximum production from a motivated staff. And, most of all now you have the time you need to tend to your major business functions. Time dealing with transactional HR makes you "NO" money!

Take your business from barely being in the black to actually building wealth. The only way – let me repeat this – the only way you're going to do this is by finely training your staff, by going out-of-the-box looking for new avenues of revenue production, by figuring out how to cut unnecessary expenses, and where to put that money to get the most return on investment to take it to the next level.

Possibly branching out into other opportunities will huge amount of your time don't worry the PEO has your back. Or, if you just want to hang on to what you presently have beware business changed don't get bit in the backside losing assets due to a poor human resource structure in your company.

Everyone says, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it", well if it get's broken it might be too late for you to get in the pool. Companies that are in the pool of a true high-quality PEO know that high

risk companies won't be brought in. It could cost your rate to go up if other high risk companies are brought in (one that already has bad safety habits or an out of control unemployment situation. It's a catch-22, if you don't perceive the need and don't get in the pool then when you find yourself in a fix and need to get in the pool it's closed.

Your business must be in decent enough shape to qualify. Spend a little time and or money now before it's too late, whether you acquire the services from a PEO or go it alone.

Call for a soft cost / hard cost analysis of your business to find out what the PEO arrangement will cost you. It doesn't take much time, it's free, it's educational, and it could very well be what you need to keep afloat during the trying days ahead.

For more information on the most highly accredited ESAC certified and locally headquartered PEO call or email consultant Connie Jackson at (800) 824-8367 or at conniej@uniquehr.com. Website: www.uniquehr.com

**The Chamber
of Commerce will be closed
on Thursday & Friday,
Dec. 24 & 25th for the
Christmas Holiday!**

OPEN HOUSE, From Page 1

as well as phonebooks. Other information is available upon request.

The EDC offers great information to those wishing to relocated a business to Alice or start one from scratch with demographics and other valuable resources.

"This is open to the community. We invite all to attend the two-hour Open House," Navejar said. "Our boards will be on hand for meet and greet as well."

The Alice Chamber of Commerce/CVB and EDC offices are located at 612 E. Main across from Wells Fargo Bank in downtown Alice.

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28th ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARADE



Best School Entry: Alice High School ROTC



Best Performance: Alice High School Band



Most Unique Entry: CASA for CASA



Best Out-of-Town Entry: BBPB Jr. High Honor Society



Best Business/Civic Entry: CHRISTUS Spohn Precious Gifts



Best Youth Entry: Texas Cheer Dragons

Thank you to all our participants!