

## Lower Valley

Cont'd from Page 22

### Ramirez Pecan Farm

While the pecan orchards between El Paso and Mesilla remain the best known, the Lower Valley is also a major grower of one of this area's major cash crops.

The Lower Valley can boast Ramirez Pecan Farm, a family run farm at 13709 north North Loop in Clint, purchased by Air Force veteran Guadalupe (Lupe Jr.) Ramirez, whose entire family has become part of the farm's legacy and business.

The farm hosts events throughout the year, including their popular Pecan Harvest Festival the first weekend in December, that welcome the public to pick their own pecans from the orchard and enjoy vendors, country style activities and food. They also host weddings and other events among the orchards, as well as ladybug releases and Earth Day celebrations.

"During the summer we are open Monday, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 1 to 5 p.m. and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.," Ramirez said, "but always call ahead (at 851-2003) as we are a family farm and often are out working the farm."

They also venture into Downtown every Saturday for the Art and Farmers Market in Union Plaza.



Pavo Real Spray Park Photo by Lisa Kay

### Spray park and other improvements

There are currently eight spray parks in El Paso County, but the Lower Valley's Pavo Real Recreation Center on Alameda is home to the first "enhanced spray park."

Like other city spray parks, Pavo Real has a splash pad with water spouts, a dump bucket and similar features, but also has two large water slides and a separate spray park for dogs, making it the only dog-friendly spray park in the city.

All the spray parks are open 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily through October.

"I think the Pavo Real spray park is a great place for a free to low-cost family outing," said Stacey Wright, community center supervisor - Aquatics for the City of El Paso Parks & Recreation. "There is a spray park and dog spray park that is free to the public to use. It has slides for the kids to enjoy."

"Families come, cook out and enjoy the day at the park. There is a pool next door to enjoy as well," she said. "It's fun to see all the families enjoying the park!"

El Paso City Rep. Henry Rivera, elected in May to represent District 7, which encompasses much of the Lower Valley between Hunter and Zaragosa, cited the spray park as an example of quality-of-life

improvements in the area that encourage people to enjoy the outdoors.

"In addition to the historic Missions Trail, residents and visitors in the Lower Valley now have many new activities to enjoy including the Independence Drive Hike and Bike Trail, where visitors can ride their bikes and take a walk along a shaded and lighted pathway without having to worry about vehicles running them over," Rivera said. "This recently completed bicycle and pedestrian corridor which is in front of Shawver Park will be augmented in the future with another pathway which is currently in development La Playa Drain."

Other pending projects, Rivera added, include improvements to Thomas Manor Park and Lionel Forti Regional Family Aquatics Facility.

### And yes, go to the Missions!

While it is certainly possible to enjoy the Lower Valley without a stop along the Mission Trail, the trail will always remain one of the most popular destinations in the entire El Paso area, not just the valley. For those who haven't yet discovered the Mission Trail, here are some of the most popular sites along the Mission Trail, which of course, includes the Missions:

- Mission Ysleta — Spanish and Tigua Indian refugees from northern New Mexico founded the community in the 1680s. The first mission was built in 1692 and rebuilt completely in both the 18th and 19th centuries.

- Mission Socorro — The first adobe structure in Socorro was built in 1692, and like nearby Mission Ysleta, was destroyed by floods in later centuries. The current structure dates back to 1843, with additions completed in 1873.

- San Elizario Chapel — Established in 1789 as a Spanish presidio, or fort, to protect the Camino Real, San Elizario was the first county seat of El Paso. The church was built in 1877, replacing a church built about 25 years earlier. Technically, San Elizario Chapel is a presidio church, not a mission. The surrounding area features an extensive historic and arts district with 17 historic sites, the Los Portales Museum and Visitor Center, numerous galleries. Information: [SanElizarioHistoricDistrict.com](http://SanElizarioHistoricDistrict.com).

- San Elizario is also the Mission Trail Art Market in Veteran's Memorial Plaza the third Sunday of the month June through November, as well as German Christmas market in December.

- Licon Dairy — The dairy's gift shop popular for its homemade asadero cheese products is located at 11951 Glorieta Road in San Elizario. The dairy also features an extensive petting zoo and regularly stocked fishing hole. Admission is free, with a nominal charge for fishing hole use.

- Tigua Indian Cultural Center — Located on Yaya Lane, east of the Ysleta Mission. The center features a museum on the Tigua tribe, Native American dances Saturdays and Sundays, and Indian bread on sale at the center, made Saturday mornings. Also featured are family-operated gift shops. Nearby Speaking Rock Entertainment Center offers live music nightly, including mariachi, tribute bands and touring acts.

For more information, visit the El Paso Mission Trail Visitor Center at 6095 Alameda, or contact 790-0661, 851-9997 or [visitelpasomissiontrail.com](http://visitelpasomissiontrail.com).

## Ysleta High School Class of 1967 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion



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