

# Local

■ **The city of Corpus Christi** Parks & Recreation Department earns three honors from the Texas Recreation and Park Society. **2B**

■ **After the unexpected shut down** Saturday of Beach Fest 2013, organizers managed to go forward with the 5K run planned for Sunday morning. **2B**

## Four will travel to sister cities

■ **Coastal Bend program funds shrink**

By **Erica Quiroz**  
erica.quiroz@caller.com  
361-886-3759

Four Corpus Christi girls will live, eat and breathe a new culture this summer when they travel as part of the Sister City Program.

For Gabriela Diaz, that means a taste of prunes. After all, Agen, France, is famous for them.

Diaz, 17, Madison Dibble, 16, Natasha Rogen, 17, and Megan Turner, 17, were selected this month to represent Corpus Christi in France,

Taiwan and Japan.

Each girl wrote an essay, completed community service projects and went through an interview before being selected by the Sister City Committee.

Diaz and Turner will spend three weeks in Agen, France. Rogen will spend two weeks in Keelung, Taiwan, and Dibble will spend two weeks in Yokosuka, Japan.

All the girls have traveled outside the U.S. before, they said.

When they return, a student from the host family will live with them for a few weeks in Corpus Christi.

The program started in 1962 and is in danger

See **TRAVEL, 2B**

### MEET THE WORLD TRAVELERS

#### MEGAN TURNER

**Age:** 17  
**School:** Incarnate Word Academy  
**Going to:** Agen, France  
**Quote:** "I'm excited to make new friends, learn about the culture — especially what's different and what's the same."

#### GABRIELA DIAZ

**Age:** 17  
**School:** Calallen High School  
**Going to:** Agen, France  
**Quote:** "Right now, the only things I know about the city is that it's famous for its prunes, they like to eat duck, and it's rural. I'm looking forward to the entire experience; I think it's going to be great."

#### MADISON DIBBLE

**Age:** 16  
**School:** Moody High School  
**Going to:** Yokosuka, Japan  
**Quote:** "I'm looking forward to experiencing what it's like to live halfway across the world in a different culture. I've been studying up on it, and the culture seems stricter than America."

#### NATASHA ROGEN

**Age:** 17  
**School:** Ray High School  
**Going to:** Keelung, Taiwan  
**Quote:** "I'm looking forward to making new friends with the other girls and meeting the family in Taiwan. I think it will be a great opportunity to have a new cultural and social experience."



Turner Diaz Dibble Rogen



PHYLLIS YOCHEM  
BIRD WATCH

## Flocks find area to roam near Gulf

In last week's column, I encouraged everyone who lives here to become a birder.

It is possible to see 200 species of birds in South Texas.

The secret is location. This area occupies a unique geographic position along the northwest coast of the Gulf of Mexico where temperate, tropical, pelagic and desert realms overlap.

Over 80 percent of the continent's migrating species funnel through here on their way to and from tropical wintering grounds.

Birders, I send you greetings. Would-be birders: Do it! You will need binoculars and comfortable shoes. Additionally, you will need to pay attention, to notice what you see.

In my yard last week I heard strange noises. The sound was like a stuffed animal, a teddy-bear squeak. The noises proved to be coming from three birds. All of them were great kiskadees. Kiskadees are large flycatchers with black and white striped faces, yellow bellies, and rufous wings and tails.

This recent immigrant from southward has only lately been showing up here. Usually they occur in pairs, and often decide to stay and nest. These appeared to be two males competing for the attention of a female.

The other day I also heard a male northern cardinal singing, and red-winged blackbirds conversing as they emptied the seed feeder.

Spring has definitely begun. Mark your calendars to attend the Spring Bird Walks sponsored during April and through the first two weeks of May. They are held at Blucher Park, adjacent to the Central Library. The entrance is the 100 block of Carrizo Street. Walks begin at about 7 a.m. Saturdays and Sundays except Easter. This is a major stop over for migrating passerines.

There are several approaches to birding. One can just look closely at every species encountered and give it a name, or one can be a collector of names, a lister. This latter is more competitive but fun, too.

As you gain experience, you will need to have a list of birds of this area and a field guide, a book of pictures, which describes each species and tells where it can be found and what it eats and needs to survive. You may even want to join a bird club. There are two good ones in Corpus Christi, the Audubon Outdoor Club of Corpus Christi, and the Coastal Bend Chapter of the Audubon Society. Both meet monthly during fall, winter and spring. They both sponsor field trips, sometimes jointly.

Phyllis Yochem, a Corpus Christi resident, has studied birds in Texas since 1960.



PHOTOS BY GEORGE TULEY/SPECIAL TO THE CALLER-TIMES

Hans Krutsinger, in the intermediate division, finds air over a double dip set up during the Dirty Leprechaun Mountain Bike Rally on Sunday at Oso Creek Park in Corpus Christi.

## Blarney, bikes and a bit of fun

■ **Riders hit trails, raise funds**

By **Mary Beth Cleavelin**  
Special to the Caller-Times

Robert Smith usually enjoys riding his black mountain bike on the steep hills that blanket central Texas.

Shortly after sunrise Sunday morning, he took his passion for biking to a lesser-known spot in

Corpus Christi during the Dirty Leprechaun Mountain Biking Rally.

"The trail itself was pretty intermediate, but it's a good trail for Corpus Christi. You're not going to get much more difficult in this area," Smith said.

See **BIKE, 2B**

caller.com GALLERY

See more photos from the bike rally.



Larry Herring rides wearing a T-shirt declaring him to be "Larry the Large Leprechaun" with a green hat atop his bike helmet.

## A&M-K giving Kleberg Ave. a facelift

■ **Engineering students keep work in area**

By **Ellen Braunstein**  
Special to the Caller-Times

KINGSVILLE — Texas A&M University-Kingsville engineering students are helping to rebuild the aging infrastructure of Kleberg Avenue while preserving the structures and scenery in the downtown historic district.

Five civil engineering students, hired by the city of Kingsville, are designing improvements to the road, sidewalks and storefronts.



Plans include additional parking, outdoor dining, brick walk ways, park benches and landscaping.

The project benefits both the school and the city, said Stephan Nix, Dean of the A&M-Kingsville College of Engineering, who supervises the five-member student team.

"Engineering majors get to graduate having done a really significant project, and the city is getting a job done for (a) much lower cost."

The ties also ensure that students will put their skills to work in the area after graduation. The city employs four recent graduates of A&M-Kingsville as engineering and Geographic Information Systems technicians. Another A&M-Kingsville graduate, Valerie Valero, is a city engineer who mentors the student team, among other responsibilities.

"The infrastructure design is one of the most practical projects the students could be working on, and they are doing very well," said Naim Khan, director of public works and city engineer, who also works closely with the students.

The infrastructure project will cost \$4 million to \$5 million to complete, Khan said. The students are first assessing the street condition, which will result in a redesign of drainage, sewer and storm systems. Their work should be completed by June.

"We're finding the issues, flooding and ponding areas, bad drainage," said Sharam Santillan, the student leader of the engineering team. The other members are: Sugarland's Andrew Frimpong, Corpus Christi's Joel Salinas, Laredo's Mark Salinas and Alice's Joe Alvarez.

The section of Kleberg

Avenue needing improvements is 4,000 feet long and 80 feet wide, including the right of way. The normal life span of a concrete road is 50 years.

Kleberg Avenue, at that age, shows signs of excessive cracking and other damage.

"Our design will be lasting, modern and efficient enough to withstand another 50 years," Alvarez said.

"There's a lot of history on this street in the heart of the city," said Santillan, who plans a career in infrastructure development. "We're trying to preserve the style and keep it pedestrian friendly to attract more tourism."