

THE MONITOR



Best bakes
These holiday cookie recipes have been deemed some of the best of 2022.

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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2022

SERVING THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY SINCE 1909

75 CENTS DAILY

'They're our focus'



Photos by Joel Martinez | jmartinez@themonitor.com

Ezekiel Marina, 3, plays in the front of his home on Friday, Dec. 2, 2022, in Mission.

Mission family with limited income need help sheltering kids

BY BERENICE GARCIA
STAFF WRITER

NORTH OF MISSION — It's a simple arrangement: Rosario Marina and Ezequiel Alvarado and their six children live on a ranch here free of charge; and in exchange, they maintain the property and look after the owner's livestock.

Their life there is far from comfortable, though, with the family making do with much less than most people here are used to.

The family has two small trailers on the property that are used as sleeping quarters. The four eldest children sleep in one trailer while the couple and their 3-year-old twin boys sleep in the other.

Between the two is a make-



Ezequiel Alvarado watches the goats at his home on Friday, Dec. 2, 2022, in Mission.

shift kitchen that is covered by thin sheets of metal and blue tarp.

Rosario, 42, and Ezequiel, 44, have lived on the ranch

with their children for nearly eight years but, to this day, their only source of water is a well on the property and their electricity is borrowed.

The family's only income comes from the few odd jobs that Ezequiel takes on — cleaning yards, fixing fences — but altogether those only pay about \$350 per week. But even that modest income is at the mercy of Ezequiel's health.

In 2010, he was diagnosed with Lupus, an autoimmune disease that, for Ezequiel, makes it difficult to be out in the sun.

"It attacked my organs, my brain, and now I look fine but if you had seen me before, I was covered in sores, sick, very skinny," Ezequiel said.

Though his more severe symptoms have largely subsided, he still has to wear pants, long-sleeved shirts, a

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Portions of LULAC's redistricting lawsuit dismissed

BY VALERIE GONZALEZ
STAFF WRITER

A large portion of a federal lawsuit filed by LULAC against Gov. Greg Abbott involving redistricting claims affecting Rio Grande Valley voters was dismissed Tuesday, though one of the claims will move forward.

The League of United Latin American Citizens, or LULAC, filed the lawsuit in October 2021 alleging the redistricting maps were being formed in ways that disadvantaged Latino voters of congressional District 15, State Board of Education Districts 2 and 3, and House District 37, among others. Another case filed by the Mexican American Legislative Caucus was joined with LULAC's lawsuit.

Plaintiffs believed the new plans were "packed" and "cracked" to, respectively, lump voters into areas that already elect minority leaders or break up large groups and push them into conservative districts.

On Tuesday, U.S. District Judge David C. Guaderrama filed an opinion dismissing LULAC's claims for congressional District 15, and

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Feds accuse 12 of extorting \$27M out of transmigrantes

BY MARK REAGAN
STAFF WRITER

The Department of Justice has charged a dozen people, including the son-in-law of a former Gulf Cartel leader, with extorting at least \$27 million from transmigrantes and using threats of violence to include four murders in Mexico to monopolize the border industry.

Transmigrantes are people who transport used vehicles and

MISSION FAMILY

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hat and sunglasses — even in the heat.

“In cold weather, it doesn’t happen as often but in the heat, it harms my skin,” he said.

He is able to get medication at a reduced price from Nuestra Clinica Del Valle, a health center that caters to people of low income. However, the cost to see a rheumatologist comes out of pocket and their inability to afford them prompted Ezequiel to cancel his last two appointments.

“If we go there, we’d be left without other things that we need,” he said. “I call and tell them that right now I don’t have enough to make the appointment but when we have enough for the appointment, I’ll go.”

He’s supposed to go to the rheumatologist every three to six months for tests but they’re also necessary to obtain the prescription for his medication. Without it, he can’t get the medication from Nuestra Clinica.

Fortunately, Ezequiel still has medication from his last refill but it’s unclear how long that will last him.

Despite the struggles, Rosario is grateful because she views Ezequiel’s life as a miracle, remembering that when he was first diagnosed with Lupus, he was told he only had about two months to live.

“His life is a miracle from God because, medically, there was nothing else left,” she said.

Rosario is just as appreciative about the family’s overall situation, despite the fact that they have



very little to their name and a limited ability to afford much else.

One reason is because of the donations they have received from others.

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when there was little work for Ezequiel, people would drop off food and other necessities at their gate.

“They didn’t tell us where they came from, they just came and left boxes,” Ezequiel said.

They also received donations through their children’s schools, according to Rosario.

On the topic of school, Rosario beamed with pride as she talked about her kids’s high performance in school.

The four kids currently enrolled in school — three girls aged 18, 15, and 12 and a boy aged 13 — often come home with little rewards for their scholastic achievement.

“They have very high grades and the teachers are always praising them for their high performance and they participate in all the extra-curricular activities at school,” Rosario said.

She stressed that the kids stay busy with their school work, helping out around the ranch, and with their participation at church.

Several days out of the

week, the family attends a nearby church where the kids play in the band — one of the girls plays the piano while their oldest boy plays the guitar.

“So they’re busy, they get home from school and they start rehearsing,” Rosario said. “They have a lot to do — here, at the school, personal things, and at church.”

While thankful that their kids are doing well in their studies and extracurricular activities, the family is undeniably in need of a better shelter.

They also are in need of clothing and basic hygiene items.

Ezequiel added that if they aren’t able to find a better place to live, he hopes to be able to buy another trailer for the older kids so that the four aren’t confined to such a small space.

“Right now, they’re our focus — that they stay in school, studying, and then hopefully we’ll get a larger place,” Rosario said.

To help, call the United Way of South Texas at (956) 686-6331 and inquire about this family and the Spirit of Christmas campaign. The Monitor has partnered with the United Way of South Texas to garner support for Rio Grande Valley families in need of monetary donations, or other items and gifts specified in this story.