

THE MONITOR



On a roll

Vaqueros hit the road for Round 3 of Women's National Invitational Volleyball Championship.
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New claims

Former Progreso cop convicted of sex assault seeks new trial from appeals court.
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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2022

SERVING THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY SINCE 1909

75 CENTS DAILY

Living on faith



Photos by Delcia Lopez | dlopez@themonitor.com

Josefina Posada, 73, watches her grandchildren Jalynn Ramirez, 10, and Heavenly Diaz, 3, dance outside her home on Wednesday, in Mercedes. Josefina takes care of the grandchildren with her husband Paulo, 73.

Facing hardship, Mercedes grandparents struggle to keep grandkids together

BY MATT WILSON
STAFF WRITER

MERCEDES — The Posadas are, for the most part, down to living on a diet of faith and prayer.

The family cooked their last packet of ramen noodles Wednesday and that's a problem, because they're not sure what they and their four great-grandchildren will eat next.

There's virtually no food left in their home.

The pantry's pretty much empty, and the remains in the fridge, which is broken and only marginally cooler than room temperature, look far from appetizing and not even particularly edible.

For the past three months, af-



Heavenly Diaz, 3, begs her grandmother Josefina Posada, 73, to carry her at her home on Wednesday in Mercedes.

ter a series of setbacks and misfortunes, the Posadas and family have lived mostly on ramen noodles, baloney and beans.

Josefina and Paulo, both 73, say applications for food stamps keep being denied or delayed.

Josefina figures she'll go to the food bank tomorrow and scrounge something up. That errand will, however, take time away from a variety of other problems: the electricity bill, a car payment, desperately needed home repairs.

They're worried about the kids, who they say need guidance.

Christmas presents this year? The Posadas laugh. They can't afford a tree, much less anything to put under it.

A much more pressing concern is that the state may come in and split the kids.

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Border agent dies in ATV accident

STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

A McAllen-based Border Patrol agent died early Wednesday morning following a crash involving an all-terrain vehicle.

In a statement issued Wednesday, U.S. Border Patrol said the crash happened at 1 a.m. The unidentified agent was tracking a group of people who entered the country illegally near Mission when he was involved in the crash, according to the statement.

Other agents in the area found the agent and initiated life-saving efforts and called EMS. The agent was taken to a hospital by ambulance where he later died.

"The death of an agent who dies while securing our nation's border is a tremendous loss for our organization and our nation. Our prayers are with his family and co-workers during this difficult time," Border Patrol Chief Raul Ortiz said in the statement.

The agency did not release the identity of the agent and declined further comment.

The Texas-Mexico border has seen multiple deadly accidents in recent years stemming from immigration-related pursuits.

In June, four migrants died and

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Justices skeptical of elections case that could alter voting rules

BY MARK SHERMAN
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Wednesday seemed skeptical of making a broad ruling that would leave state legislatures virtually unchecked in making rules for congressional and presidential elections.

In nearly three hours of arguments, liberal and conservative justices appeared to take issue with the main thrust of a challenge asking them to essentially eliminate the power of state courts to strike down legislature-drawn

FAITH

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The couple fixes one problem, and two other problems become a crisis.

“We have never in all our years struggled like now. Never,” Josefina said. “But we have a lot of faith in our Lord, that he guides us in a way that we can get through what we’re going through. Whatever problems we’re in, we just give them to our Lord to help us. That’s the only thing that we can do to get along.”

God has some catching up to do in terms of blessings for the Posadas.

Their real trouble started in September, a bitter turn from fortunes that seemed to be looking up.

Josefina and Paulo, both 73, had gone on a little weeklong vacation to West Texas, a rare luxury in a life that’s largely been filled with work and child-rearing.

Money’s usually tight for the Posadas. In addition to their own children, they’ve raised a good deal of their grandkids and great-grandkids over the years after the state found those children’s parents to be lacking.

Things, however, were working out earlier this year. Aside from benefits, Paulo would clean up after bingo night or dances at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Mercedes, bringing in enough money to get ahead some.

They rode to West Texas in style. Paulo’s ramshackle truck no longer has plates and isn’t supposed to be driven, so the couple bought a nice, new-looking



red van.

The van sits in the driveway of the couple’s home, which is neither nice nor new. Flooding a couple years back drove standing water into the home. The roof is disintegrating.

A band of missionaries stopped by after the storm, tacking on some tarps and putting in a little sheetrock.

It hasn’t done much.

A menacing crack spreads across the ceiling in the living room. Paulo’s done some patchwork of his own in the kitchen, but none of it does much good without a roof that works.

Still, it was a problem he could address piecemeal with that little KC Hall income.

Plus, there was the van, which was a real step forward, finally giving the Posadas a reliable means of transportation for themselves and the great-grandchildren they generally care for.

Things took a turn when they came home in September. The couple returned to a crisis: the KC Hall had flooded.

Paulo’s not sure when it sprung a leak — sometime after a bingo in late August — but he says the damage was severe. He was told bingo night wasn’t earning enough money for repairs,

and for the foreseeable future, he was out of work.

About the same time, the Posadas got two more mouths to feed. They returned to learn Child Protective Services was taking two of their great-granddaughters away from their mother.

Josefina wouldn’t hear of it. The Posadas took the kids in, which they’ve done many times for other grandchildren and great-grandchildren over the years.

They’re obviously affectionate.

Paulo is a touch mischievous. Sometimes he teases the grandkids, saying they’re his “termites,” because they’re always making trouble.

The kids retort that he’s the big termite.

Josefina is a rock.

She looks, frankly, like she doesn’t belong in the rundown little bungalow: matronly, polite — an image of good manners and fortitude.

“Me, as a grandma, I will defend any of my grandchildren. It doesn’t matter what we have to go through, because my grandchildren keep me and my husband going,” she said. “You understand? That is my energy, my grandkids. That’s why I will never stop fighting for them. I’m not gon-



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Josefina Posada, 73, carries Heavenly Diaz, 3, as Hipolito Posada Jr., 8, looks on at her home on Wednesday Dec. 7, 2022, in Mercedes.

na let anything happen to them.”

It doesn’t seem fair that Paulo and Josefina have to fight so hard for their grandchildren. It doesn’t seem like a fair ending to their love story, and it is a love story.

The two met at a dance half a century ago. What attracted them to each other?

“I liked the way he danced,” Josefina shrugs.

They kept dancing through the years, occasionally competitively, in small towns upstate.

They would work agriculture, largely. At one point Josefina worked the scales at a grain exchange, and was a sort of foreman. Paulo likes to boast a bit about slinging heavy sacks of produce up into trucks.

Nights were for the dance floor. What did they dance?

“Everything,” Paulo says. “Polkas, cumbias, boleros.” He points at a solid-looking rocking chair by the door that’s seen better days, a trophy from a first place win at a contest. They won other contests. One time they drove a mother to tears: she

told them their dancing reminded her of how her son would dance.

They still danced, till the KC Hall flooded this year. That put an end to lots of things.

Paulo, when he’s frustrated, sometimes walks out at night and looks at the stars, praying.

Josefina occasionally gets in the new van, letting herself cry where no one can see her.

The van will probably have to go. Last month the power company almost shut off the lights. Some KCs pitched in and helped them out.

The Posadas sole extravagance is a little homemade shrine to the Virgen de Guadalupe in the front yard: statues set in an old cabinet, ringed by fake flowers and LED lights.

They run the lights — sparingly — at Christmas-time, a sign that they’re keeping the faith, which is pretty much all they have.

It is, Josefina says, enough. They’ll get by.

“We turn everything off and we leave that on. We

trust in our Lord,” she says. “If me and my husband have to struggle to feed my grandchildren, we’re going to feed our grandchildren.”

The Posada clan could do with a little more this Christmas.

A tree would be nice, along with some carpentry supplies to keep it from getting wet. A refrigerator is also a desperate necessity, along with a bed for 10-year-old Jalynn’s bedroom.

She’d also like a can of pink paint for that bedroom, to spruce it up a bit.

They could use money, especially for food. Jalynn would particularly like some sushi for a change.

Heavenly, 3, wants anything Frozen-related, especially some Elsa slippers.

Hipolito Jr., 8, would like some miniature toy skateboards.

Jada, 11, would like a blue backpack.

If you’re feeling particularly generous, all are keenly interested in an iPhone, iPad or laptop.