



Tulare Union punches ticket to title game

SPORTS, 1B

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Yadi Valerio Rivera and her husband Emilio Rivera are showing their documentary passion project "Grit" at Galaxy Theatre Tulare on Feb. 23 and Feb. 24. The documentary tells the inspiring story of retired Tulare Fire Chief Luis Nevarez. PROVIDED BY YADI VALERIO RIVERA

Tulare fire chief's story comes to life in 'Grit'

Meade Trueworthy
Special to Visalia Times-Delta
USA TODAY NETWORK

Local First Responders and their families are invited to a free special event on Monday, Feb. 23 and Tuesday, Feb. 24 at Galaxy Theatre.

Yadi Valerio Rivera ("The Family Business," "El Chicano") and her husband Emilio Rivera ("Sons of Anarchy," "Mayans M.C.") are screening their documentary passion project "Grit." The husband and wife are also creative partners and run The Outside the Box Films.

"Grit" tells the story of Luis Nevarez, Tulare's first Latino Fire Chief.

"We want to reach the community and all the first responders in Tulare with this movie," said Valerio Rivera, who directed and co-produced the film. "It's a love letter to all the people who have been through hard times and need to find strength and healing."

Nevarez overcame many challenges, from life in a gang and losing friends, to an

on the job accident that cost him the lower half of his left arm. Through it all his strength and determination helped him persevere.

After the documentary screening, a Q&A will be held with Valerio Rivera, Rivera and Nevarez.

Finding the strength to move forward

Nevarez's career started in 1989 as a seasonal firefighter for Tulare County CAL Fire. From there he went on to serve the city of Tulare as a firefighter and EMT until his accident in 2002.

Being a man of extreme grit and determination, Nevarez was back on the job as a full time firefighter a year after his accident.

"Being a firefighter with an upper extremity prosthetic was unheard of at that time," Nevarez said. "I worked full time and trained with all the new firefighters and went through the academy again to prove to myself I could do it. No one was making me

do it, I did it for myself."

In 2004, Nevarez was promoted to a captain before serving as the division chief. In 2018, he was appointed to fire chief.

Nevarez served as Tulare's first Latino Fire Chief for five years before he retired from the department in 2021. After retirement he went on to serve as the Interim Fire Chief for Hanford and Kings County. To this day, he teaches at Porterville College and College of the Sequoias.

Valerio Rivera's husband, who co-produced "Grit," grew up with Nevarez. They both overcame the challenges they faced and have gone on to be successful Latinos building careers that help change the people they meet, mentor and work with.

"We try to teach all the kids that come through Hispanic 100's Pay It Forward Foundation to turn their pain into power," Valerio Rivera said. "Change is possible. Never give up and you can turn your life around. This documentary shows that."

Cartel head's death leads to violence in Mexico

Lauren Villagran, Kathryn Palmer and Zac Anderson
USA TODAY

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said Feb. 23 that normal activity had resumed following a day of violence in several regions of the country.

"Today, there is tranquility," she said, adding that peace had been secured and blockades largely cleared.

The U.S. State Department partially relaxed its security alert for Americans in several Mexican states, which had initially included the international vacation hot spots of Puerto Vallarta, Guadalajara, Tijuana, Cancun, Cozumel, Playa del Carmen and Tulum. However, some areas remained under a "shelter in place" advisory from the U.S. government Feb. 23, including the states of Baja California, Nayarit and Jalisco, including Tijuana and Puerto Vallarta, and parts of a dozen other Mexican states.

The unrest was triggered by the Feb. 22 killing of a powerful cartel leader in a military operation.

Nemesio Oseguera, commonly known as "El Mencho," was Mexico's most-wanted cartel leader, with a \$15 million bounty for information leading to his capture. He rose through the ranks and launched a deadly coup to become the leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, or CJNG. The criminal enterprise rapidly grew into a continent-spanning empire that rivaled its former allies in the Sinaloa Cartel, run by kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, who is serving life in prison.

Oseguera's death triggered waves of violence across Mexico as cartel operatives carried out revenge attacks.

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Gunmen suspected to be supporters of Nemesio Oseguera, commonly known as "El Mencho," set cars and businesses ablaze on Feb. 22.

ULISES RUIZ/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

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