#### LSA DONATES TO CASA DE MISERICORDIA

The Laredo Sports Association made several donations to fulfill the association's mission.

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## **SPORTS**

#### KICKING OFF THE NEW YEAR

Girls soccer returns Friday with 16 teams competing in the Border Olympics Tournament.



NO.1 HOMETOWN NEWS SOURCE

### Laredo Morning Times

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David Gomez Jr./Laredo Morning Times

Pallbearers carry the casket of J.J. Gomez Jr. for the Mass of Christian Burial on Dec. 29, 2025, outside San Martin de Porres Catholic Church.

# Laredo mourns Parks Director J.J. Gomez, beloved coach and mentor

By David Gomez Jr. STAFF WRITER

The Laredo community gathered Monday morning to remember Parks and Recreation Director Juan Jose "J.J." Gomez, a longtime coach, mentor and public servant whose sudden death last week left a lasting void across the city.

Gomez, 61, died Tuesday, Dec. 23. Funeral services were held at San Martin de Porres Catholic Church, where Monsignor Alex Sanchez highlighted Gomez's lifelong commitment to mentoring young people and serving others.

"He believed that God was his strongest support, and it was truly his passion, his mission to mentor young people, Sanchez said during the Mass of Christian Burial.

Sanchez compared Gomez's approach to life to that of St. Therese of Lisieux, known for her belief in doing small things with great faith and love. The

priest said Gomez embraced that philosophy, believing that by doing the "little things" well, greater good would fol-

Gomez joined the city of Laredo's Parks and Recreation Department in 2016 after retir ing from a 29-year coaching career with the United Independent School District. He served three years as athletic superintendent and three months as interim director

Gomez continues on A4

## Man charged in ninth homicide of 2025 after south **Laredo shooting**

By Jose De La Rosa STAFF WRITER

A man was arrested and charged with murder in connection with a fatal shooting reported Monday night in south Laredo, according to the Laredo Police Department.

Officers responded at about 8:25 p.m. to the 4700 block of Primavera Lane after a report of a shooting, police said.

When officers arrived, they found a man who had been shot multiple times lying in the middle of the street, according to police.

The man was pronounced dead at the scene and was identified as 49-year-old Fernando Hinojosa, police said.

The suspected shooter remained at the scene and was identified as 35-year-old Noe

Cantu Jr., according to police. Cantu told officers he shot Hinojosa with a handgun, which was recovered as evidence, police said.

After consulting with the Webb County District Attorney's Office, investigators determined there was sufficient evidence to charge Cantu with murder, a first-degree felony, according to police.

The shooting marked the ninth homicide investigated by LPD in 2025, according to po-

Jail records show Cantu was booked into the Webb County Jail early Tuesday on a murder charge and remained in custody, with bond information not immediately available.

Police did not release a motive or additional circumstances surrounding the shooting.



Jose De La Rosa/Laredo Morning Times

Police secure the scene of a fatal shooting Monday, Dec. 29, 2025, in the 4700 block of Primavera Lane in Laredo, Texas.

### Texas to receive \$281M in federal funds for rural health care

THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

Texas will be receiving the biggest slice of the federal government's first rollout of a \$50 billion fund created to fortify rural health care across the country. On Monday, the Trump ad-

ministration announced how it plans to allot billions of dollars to states over the course of five years from its federal Rural Health Transformation Program the fund Congress created earlier this year after approving the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. That legislation, in tandem with creation of the fund, slashed Medicaid funding by an estimated \$1

States made bids to receive portions of the one-time federal funding and Texas, according to the Centers for Medicare & Med-

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Shelby Tauber/The Texas Tribune

The Seymour Hospital on June 30, 2025. The town of Seymour is about 50 miles southwest on Wichita Falls.

icaid Services, is slated to receive more than \$281.3 million for the first year of the program in 2026.

That's around \$81 million more

than what the state asked for in

its application.

Alaska is getting the second biggest portion of \$272.7 million a

While Texas is receiving the most funds, its rank lags compared to its population. Half of the federal dollars will be distributed equally to each state. Texas, which has the most rural residents of any state, will receive about \$60 per resident in a rural county — the lowest rate in the nation.

"More than 60 million Americans living in rural areas have the right to equal access to quality care," U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said in a news release. "This historic investment puts local hospitals, clinics, and health workers in control of their communities' healthcare."

The funds come as budget

shortfalls and rising costs have forced Texas' rural hospitals and clinics into a significant health care crisis.

The need for health care in rural communities is also higher because they tend to have higher uninsured rates; 76 counties in Texas have uninsured rates over 20%, and 60 of those counties are in rural areas, according to a report from the National Institute of Health.

The NIH also found that "deaths from cancer, heart disease, respiratory disease, and unintentional injury are higher in rural Texas than Texas overall," and that "indicators of health outcomes are worsening in rural Texas populations."

"Rural Texans across the state will benefit from this historic Health continues on A4

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