

BROWNSVILLE The Herald

WEDNESDAY, JULY 31, 2019

BORN ON THE FOURTH OF JULY 1892

75 CENTS



SCHOOL SUPPLIES

The Community Development Corporation of Brownsville will host its first "Back to School Block Party" from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. today to give out free school supplies and refreshments for children who attend the event.

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TEXAS



TROUBLE WITH THE SYSTEM

In early June, twin brothers from Guatemala let their sister in California know they were about to cross the U.S.-Mexico border. Then they vanished for almost a month.

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NATION



WALMART SHOOTING

GETTING A JUMP

Dentists sponsor LEAP Week scholarships



BY STEVE CLARK
STAFF WRITER

A group of high school juniors from IDEA Frontier have experienced the week of a lifetime thanks to the efforts of Dr. Saam Zarrabi, co-founder of Rodeo Dental & Orthodontics.

Rodeo Dental, which has three locations in Brownsville and 21 around the state, sponsored scholarships for 30 students to attend the LEAP Foundation's LEAP Week 2019 at the University of California, DIB Angeles, June 21-27. The cost per student was more than \$2,000.

PLEASE SEE LEAP, A9

Above: Dr. Saam Zarrabi, co-founder of Rodeo Dental & Orthodontics, arranged for scholarships for 30 IDEA Frontier students to attend the annual LEAP Week life skills conference in Los Angeles this month.

STEVE CLARK
THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD

Mexico: Migrant totals decline

Nation says numbers down 39% since May

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MEXICO CITY — Mexico said Tuesday the number of mainly Central American migrants traveling through the country to reach the U.S. border has declined by 39% since May.

Mexico's foreign relations secretary, Marcelo Ebrard, said the number of migrants fell from 144,278 in May, to 87,648 so far in July.

Ebrard said the drop is the result of greater Mexican enforcement of its immigration laws, as well as investment in job creation in Central America.

Ebrard said Mexico would hold a conference soon to attract international donors for a Central America development plan.

He said Mexico would not provide shelters for all the migrants sent back to Mexico by the United States while awaiting resolution of their U.S. asylum requests.

That has become an issue in the Mexican border city of Nuevo Laredo, where hundreds of migrants have been bused from the dangerous border town to the city of Monterrey, and simply left at a bus station.

Ebrard said more than half of the migrants sent back under the Remain in Mexico program, also known as the Migrant Protection Protocol, hadn't asked for shelter.

PLEASE SEE MIGRANTS, A5



LEAP

FROM PAGE A1

LEAP stands for Leadership Excellence and Achievement Program. Each year for LEAP Week, 500 students from around the world descend on UCLA, where they live on campus and learn life lessons for higher personal, academic and professional achievement. The week consists of interactive workshops, small group exercises, celebrity speakers, mentor sessions and social activities.

"The program is all about soft skills," Zarrabi said. "They talk about how to interview for a job, how to apply for college, working to find a mentor, creating mastermind groups, which is an incredible skill, which is connecting with peers that want to succeed, and working together to collaborate in success groups."

IDEA chose 30 students based on the quality of the essays they were required to write as part of the scholarship application process.

"Most of them have never even been on a plane before, which is incredible," Zarrabi said. "They were super excited about that part — I think more than going to the event."

LEAP Week's celebrity speakers have included actor Anthony Hopkins, SpaceX CEO Elon Musk, eight-time Olympic gold medalist Apolo Ohno, NBA All-Star Chris Paul and actor Mark Wahlberg. This year's speakers include singer Paula Abdul and actress Kathy Bates.

Dr. Bill Dorfman, a Los Angeles-based, dentist-to-the-stars and celebrity in his own right, co-founded the nonprofit LEAP Foundation, which held its



COURTESY PHOTO FROM CARSON NICE

Top: Brownsville dentist Dr. Saam Zarrabi, center, poses with a group of IDEA Frontier juniors before their trip to Los Angeles for the 2019 LEAP Week conference July 21-27. Above: Dark Torres, a junior at IDEA Frontier school in Brownsville, is shown giving a speech on the closing night of LEAP Week

first program for students in 2008. Dorfman was also Zarrabi's mentor, when he was attending UCLA as an undergrad and applying to dentistry school in San Francisco.

Zarrabi shadowed and interned with the charismatic Dorfman, who hadn't started LEAP yet but was already coaching young people and teaching life skills.

"He built a whole program out of it and it's been a hit," Zarrabi said. "He's done a great job."

Zarrabi said the experience with Dorfman ignited a passion for mentorship. For the past 10 years, he's mentored LEAP students interested in dentistry, and last week flew to Southern California to participate in LEAP Week, which sells out every year.

"They have a huge mentor workshop," Zarrabi said. "(Students) have to bring suits and professional gear. They do sort of a 20-minute speed round of interviewing with mentors. Dr. Dorfman will bring in mentors from all industries: real estate, business, education, health care."

Rodeo Dental sponsored its first IDEA student to LEAP Week about five years

ago. The following year, three students received scholarships to the event. Two years ago, they upped it to five scholarships. Then Dorfman had an idea.

"Last year my mentor challenged me," Zarrabi said. "It was his 60th birthday and he said, 'Hey, can we try to do 60 students for my birthday?'"

That was a lot to pull off, so Zarrabi instead proposed 60 scholarships spread out over two years. Even then, he said, it was a "major leap of faith."

"I talked to my team," Zarrabi said. "I talked to my partners. They said let's commit to this. This is a good program. We talked to IDEA and they said let's go for it."

Each Rodeo Dental location is sponsoring one student per year, with Zarrabi helping making up the difference. Juniors are targeted since they're about to apply for college, he said.

"They come back from LEAP and that senior year they're fired up," Zarrabi said. "This is a complete game changer. This is not the only program like this out there, but I can tell you this is one of the best ones out there."