



NEWSLETTER OF THE VALLEY PROUD ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL  
VOLUME XVI | JUNE, 2011

## Valley Proud Wins Statewide Environmental Award

Valley Proud has been named a winner of the Texas Environmental Excellence Awards for 2011 from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

The Excellence Award in the Civic/Community category, along with awards in seven other categories, was handed out at an awards banquet held in Austin on May 4, as part of the annual TCEQ Environmental Trade Fair and Conference. Accepting the award on behalf of Valley Proud was Georgiana Matz, Chairman, and Maxwell Pons III (Trey), student participant in the Point Isabel Independent School District Recycling Program.

Texas Environmental Excellence Awards celebrate the best efforts of citizens, communities, busi-



*Buddy Garcia, TCEQ Commissioner, Georgiana Matz, Chairman Valley Proud Environmental Council, Maxwell (Trey) Pons III, P.I. High School student, Laura Maxwell, ED VPEC, Doak Dunkin, VPEC Board Member, Bryan W. Shaw, Ph.D. TCEQ Commissioner, Carlos Rubinstein, TCEQ Commissioner, at Awards Ceremony in Austin.*

nesses, and organizations to preserve and protect the Texas environment.

This is the thirteenth state and national

award Valley Proud has won in its twenty-one year history. (See the list of awards in this publication). The Award recognizes Valley Proud as "a Rio Grande Valley organization that preserves the natural beauty and environment of the region by promoting educational and public awareness projects."

Accepting the award, Valley Proud Chairman Georgiana Matz praised the many volunteers throughout the Rio Grande Valley who give of their time and resources to the organization. "We owe our success to the volunteers who work so hard on all our projects, as well as the businesses, municipalities, and generous individuals who help us fund them," Chairman Matz stated.

## Valley Proud - Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

Twenty-one years ago, a small group of concerned citizens met in the Lower Rio Grande Valley to discuss how to motivate people to recycle and conserve space in our rapidly filling landfills.

Out of that meeting came the creation of the Valley Proud Environmental Council, a regional, binational project-oriented organization which addresses a broad range of local needs from responsible waste disposal to reforestation to litter control on our beaches.

Thanks to hundreds of dedicated volunteers, including the board of directors, Valley Proud has grown into the most successful regional nonprofit organization in the United States. Our efforts have been recognized with 13 major state and national awards. Valley Proud has an office with a paid

coordinator, supported financially by members, sponsors, and grants.

***"The only way forward, if we are going to improve the quality of the environment, is to get everyone involved."***

***—Richard Rogers***

A milestone in Valley Proud's development came in 2000, when Dr. and Mrs. M.M. MacRae donated land to us which we were able to sell and use the proceeds to establish the MacRae Endowment Fund. With the income from this fund, along with the continued support of our loyal sponsors and new contributors, we are assured of

the continuation of Valley Proud's projects for the benefit of the over three million people who live on both sides of the Rio Grande. Our hope is that other individuals, companies and organizations will recognize our efforts and contribute to the endowment fund in the coming years.

What are our hopes for tomorrow? We are counting on continued support from our many volunteers, our sponsors, and the generous support from both English and Spanish media. That will make it possible to continue and expand the projects that have made Valley Proud what it is today.

The people who have the most claim to the earth we live on have not yet been born. We must never forget we did not inherit this earth from our parents, it is on loan from our children, our grandchildren and the generations to come.

## A Timeless Message From The Founding Chairman

Thank you for your interest in improving the quality of life and conserving natural resources in this area.

Valley Proud strongly believes that the most effective way to promote responsible behavior is through education and hands-on projects.

There is an old Chinese proverb that sums it up very well:

*If you are thinking a year ahead,  
sow a seed,*

*If you are thinking ten years ahead,  
plant a forest,*

*If you are thinking one hundred years ahead,  
educate the people,*

*By sowing a seed once, you  
harvest only once,*

*By planting a forest, you will  
harvest tenfold,*

*By educating the people, you will  
harvest your dreams.*

Valley Proud invites you to join in "harvesting" our dreams.

Never forget that giant oak was nothing more than a little nut who held his ground.



James R. Matz

## VALLEY PROUD AWARDS

Texas Urban Forestry Council  
Regional Project Award

Clean Texas 2000 Governor's Award  
for Environmental Excellence for  
Civic/Non-Profit Organizations

Keep Texas Beautiful  
Civic Organization Award

National Arbor Day Foundation  
Regional Program Award

Robert Rodale  
Environmental Excellence Award

Renew America National Award  
for Community Environmental Education

Keep America Beautiful  
National Regional Project Award

Chevron-Times Mirror Magazine  
Conservation Award

Texas General Land Office  
Coastal Education & Public Awareness Award

Renew America National Award  
for Environmental Sustainability  
and Community Education

Gulf Guardian Award Civic/Non Profit  
Captain Crab Clean Beach Campaign  
& Puppet Show

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)  
Texas Environmental Excellence Award  
-Civic/Community

Texas Forest Service  
Tree Planting Project of the Year Award

## Trash Bash Started It All In April 1990

The first event ever held by the Valley Proud Environmental Council, which was also the first multi-county cleanup in the state of Texas, was the All Valley Trash Bash in April, 1990.

In 1996, the one day event was expanded to a week in order to collect household furniture, appliances and other non-hazardous materials from rural residents in the four county area.

Now in its twenty-first year, the Trash Bash continues to lead the way in cleaning up roads and streets, alleys and drainage ditches all across the Rio Grande Valley. The All Valley Trash Bash has since been



City of Pharr Trash Bash volunteers did a great job of cleaning up the community.

joined by the Annual Don't Mess With Texas Trash-Off organized by the Texas Department of Transportation, Keep Texas Beautiful, and the Keep America Beautiful's Great American Cleanup. In 2010, more than 74,100 volunteers cleaned over 6, 219 miles of Texas highways and collected over 8 millions pounds of trash.

Nothing destroys the natural beauty of our highways and byways more than the trash discarded by careless individuals and trash

dumped in our drainage ditches and the Arroyo Colorado creates a safety issue when heavy rains come. Thousands of dedicated volunteers work hard to clean up after those people who keep trashing our country. Valley Proud is glad to be in the forefront of helping to keep our four-county Rio Grande Valley beautiful.

## Arroyo Cleanup Big Success

Volunteers gathered at 7:30 a.m. on Saturday, April 9, at the Rio Hondo Boat Ramp, to board boats for the annual Boat Cleanup of the Arroyo Colorado.

Sponsored by the Valley Proud Environmental Council, the Valley Sportsmen Club and Keep Texas Beautiful, the volunteers collected more than twenty 40-pound bags of trash between the Port of Harlingen and Circle X. Lawn furniture, old tires, junked television sets, construction barrels, and other assorted debris was also found along the way and added to this total.

Valley Proud Chairwoman Georgiana Matz said it was unfortunate to be finding so much trash along the Arroyo. "Our goal is to educate the community and put a stop to the dumping," Matz added.

Chuck Fultz of the Valley Sportsmen Club said not everyone is up to taking care of their surroundings. "Your heart's gotta be in it," he said.

Diana Bustamante, a member of the Rio Grand Valley Jaycees, who also participated in the cleanup, said the cleanup was a great experience for future leaders of the community.

At the end of the cleanup, the volunteers gathered for a barbecue lunch.

## Rio Reforestation XIX Restores Wildlife Corridor

Since 1994, Valley Proud has partnered with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to recruit volunteers to plant hundreds of thousands of native seedling trees and shrubs in an ongoing effort to restore wildlife habitat stretching from Falcon Lake State Park to the Gulf of Mexico.

Due to heavy rains, Rio Reforestation XIX was rescheduled to November 6, 2010, with over 500 volunteers planting 12, 800 seedling trees and shrubs on the La Sol Del Rey Tract of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Wildlife Refuge near Edinburg. The event began at 8 a.m. and ended at noon with a welcome lunch of hot dogs, chips and cold drinks.

Restoring native habitat is critical in an area where only about five percent of the original remains. Reforestation helps protect native plant and animal species, and supports ecotourism and birding. Valley Proud has been an active participant in this habitat restoration for sixteen years. This



Family participates in another successful native tree planting project has helped to restore more than 746 acres of habitat.

The restored habitat greatly improves the quality of life in the Rio Grande Valley. Valley Proud is pleased to be involved in this important project. Project Rio Reforestation XX is scheduled for October 1, 2011.

## Arbor Month Celebrated Locally in February



Community members attend Keep Harlingen Beautiful Arbor Day ceremony.

a free comprehensive guide for planning and holding Arbor Month ceremonies.

James Matz, Valley Proud's founder, was a strong advocate of tree planting, especially native trees. He stated back in 2008 that "if each person in South Texas and Northern Mexico would plant just one tree during the next seven years, by the year 2015, we can add about three million trees to improve the quality of life and celebrate Valley Proud's 25th anniversary."

The Valley Proud Environmental Council coordinates Arbor Month activities and has published a series of planting guides. They are "A Guide To Growing Healthy Trees In The Rio Grande Valley (in both English and Spanish), "A Guide For Selecting and Planting Native Shrubs and Trees on South Padre Island and In the Lower Laguna Madre Area", and "A Guide For Selecting and Planting Native Cacti, Ground Cover, Trees, Vines and Wildflowers In The Rio Grande Valley of Texas And Mexico." All the Guides are available, free of charge, by calling 956-412-8004, visiting our web site [www.valleyproud.org](http://www.valleyproud.org), or e-mailing us at [vpec@sbcglobal.net](mailto:vpec@sbcglobal.net).

Now that almost 95% of the original native trees, shrubs and plants have been destroyed to accommodate development, it is more important than ever that we take advantage of Arbor Month to plant native trees and shrubs. It is a well documented fact that ecotourism has grown and positively impacts our economy. This will only continue if we recognize that the preservation and creation of habitat makes it possible for the animals and birds that tourists come to see, survive and multiply.

Planting a tree is an act of optimism and kindness, a labor of love and a commitment to stewardship. Remember Plant A Memory, Plant A Tree. Do It Today For Tomorrow.

## Christmas Tree Composting

This Valley Proud project began some years ago as "Dunes Day", with used Christmas Trees collected and trucked to South Padre Island, where they were placed on beaches to encourage the formation of sand dunes.

When transportation costs made hauling trees impractical, the project turned to composting the trees to use for mulching.

Each December, Valley Proud runs ads and public service radio and TV announcements to

encourage individuals and businesses in the four Valley counties to call their local city hall to find out where to take their used trees for composting. Trees with decorations, tinsel and flocking removed, were accepted at 19 Valley locations from December 27, 2010 through January 8, 2011.

Over the years, this project has saved a tremendous amount of valuable space in our rapidly filling landfills.

## Recycling Phone Books Saves Landfill Space

Each March, Valley Proud joins with AT&T Real Yellow Pages, city recycling centers, and the Valley media, to promote recycling of outdated yellow page directories.

Recycled phone books are made into useful products such as animal bedding, home insulation, bathroom tissue, cereal boxes, roofing shingles and new phone books.

Another real bonus for recycling phone directories is that it keeps them out of the landfills.

Businesses and individuals were urged to take their old phone books to collection centers in Alamo, Alton, Brownsville, Edinburg, Harlingen, Pharr, San Juan and Weslaco; and San Benito City Hall. An estimated 12.59 tons of directories were collected from March 1 through March 31, 2011.



Directories waiting for processing at McAllen Recycling Center.

## Captain Crab Clean Beach Puppet Show

How do you convince a fourth grader of the importance of keeping our beaches clean? Valley Proud decided the best way to get their attention was to make it fun for them. So, we took the clean beach mascot, Captain Crab, and built a puppet show around him.

Since the first performance in January, 2006, the Captain Crab Puppet Show has performed for 36,982 elementary students in the four county Rio Grande Valley, in 131 elementary schools, as well as 50,722 viewers in 64 other public events.

Prior to the puppet show, a 20 minute video entitled "A Day At The Beach," emphasizing the message "Trash Our Beach, Pay The Price," is shown to the students. A cumulative survey of fourth grade students conducted through April, 2011, showed that 35% of students had heard of Captain Crab, 38% had seen Captain Crab on billboards and beach signs, and 64% wanted to help "Captain Crab and the Beach Patrol" stamp out litter.

The Captain Crab Clean Beach campaign has been funded through a grant from the Texas General Land Office and NOAA. This allows Valley Proud to offer puppet show performances to school districts at no charge.

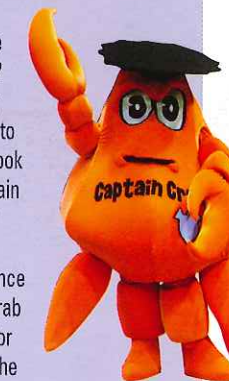
A new "Captain Crab and The Beach Patrol" puppet show - "The Three R's" - is being produced adding a recycling component to the revised script. An educational pilot recycling program was launched through the Point Isabel Independent School District. Kicked off on November 14, 2009, Point Isabel Schools collected and recycled over 17 tons of paper, newsprint, and cardboard through December 31, 2010. This pilot program is a highly successful partnership between the P.I.I.S.D, the city of Port Isabel and VPEC, and a great addition to our campaign.

The entire Captain Crab Clean Beach campaign has proven highly effective.

## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Valley Proud Environmental Council, a non-profit 501 (c-3) organization, is to preserve the natural beauty and environment of the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas and Mexico, by promoting education and public awareness projects, including those that encourage proper tree planting and maintenance, solid waste management and responsible behavior by all those who live and visit here.

We fulfill our mission by forging partnerships between grassroots volunteer organizations and the public and private sectors, which support our projects and result in improving the quality of life, enhancing economic development and tourism, and which conserve public and private natural resources.





Maribel Bermudez Guerrero

## Meet A Valley Proud Board Member

A graduate from the University of Texas at Brownsville with a degree in Biology, Maribel has enjoyed a lifetime of the people, culture and natural beauty of the Rio Grande Valley. Her profession in the environmental consulting field primarily includes the development of NEPA compliance documentation and federal and state agency permitting for over 15 years, but her more enjoyable occupation has been her commitment to public involvement, community improvement projects and environmental stewardship programs.

Maribel has been recognized by the City of Brownsville Commission for her work with the Brownsville Beautification Committee and currently serves on various other boards including the Historic Brownsville Museum, Port of Brownsville Industry Committee and Amigos Artistas Art Association. Maribel has been a member of the Valley Proud Board of Directors since 2005.

She will be celebrating her seventh wedding anniversary this October with her husband Ben Guerrero. They have two beautiful daughters Sofia Maribel (4) and Andrea Isabel (3). They also share a love of animal companions including two dogs, a parrot and a rabbit.

## Don't Bag It Campaign



Yard waste and trimmings account for nearly 17% of municipal solid waste. This adds up to 31 million tons of trash going into landfills in one year's time. With landfill space at a premium, Valley Proud has long been campaigning for individuals to leave

grass clippings on their lawns when mowing.

Ads are placed in both daily and weekly newspapers throughout the Rio Grande Valley, as well as public service radio announcements that carry the "Don't Bag It" message.

In addition to saving valuable landfill space, grass clippings left on the lawn provide valuable nutrients to the soil, reduce the need for fertilizer, and save water.

## Don't Be Crude- Used Oil Recycling

Valley Proud and the Texas Commission On Environmental Quality began a joint project in 1997 to promote recycling of used oil and oil filters.

The millions of gallons of used oil that is improperly disposed of each year seriously damages the environment. The oil seeps into the water table and winds up in the water supply.

An extensive media campaign is launched each year to encourage individuals and businesses to recycle their used oil and oil filters. Valley Proud uses newspaper ads, flyers and public service radio announcements to spread the message, "Don't Be Crude," "You Dump It, You Drink It," put used oil and oil filters in their place by recycling them.

Advance Auto Parts, Auto Zone, O'Reilly Auto Parts, and Pep Boys are all participating in the program by accepting used oil and oil filters. Most cities and towns in the four county Rio Grande Valley have set up collection points for used oil and filters. Check our website [valleyproud.org](http://valleyproud.org) for links to community recycling centers.

## VALLEY PROUD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

<b>Chairman - Georgiana Matz</b> <i>Palm Valley</i>	<b>Maribel Bermudez Guerrero</b> <i>Rancho Viejo</i>
<b>Vice Chairman - Scott Friedman</b> <i>Marina Village, Inc., Port Isabel</i>	<b>Courtney Hayden</b> <i>South Padre Island Cinema</i>
<b>Secretary/Treasurer - Elaine Lockhart</b> <i>Harlingen</i>	<b>Bill Jorn, General Manager</b> <i>KVEO-TV - Brownsville</i>
<b>Nancy Brown</b> <i>Santa Ana Wildlife Refuge, Alamo</i>	<b>Val Peisen</b> <i>L &amp; F Distributors, LLC</i> <i>McAllen</i>
<b>Stacey E. Buford</b> <i>Rio Grande Valley Sugar Growers</i> <i>Santa Rosa</i>	<b>Francisco Treviño</b> <i>Monterrey, Mexico</i>
<b>Doak Dunkin</b> <i>Dial Dunkin &amp; Associates, Harlingen</i>	<b>Blanca Vela</b> <i>Brownsville</i>
<b>Dave Friedman</b> <i>Sea Ranch Enterprises, SPI</i>	

## ENDOWMENT FUND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

<b>PRESIDENT</b> <b>William PC Hudson</b> <i>Paseo de la Resaca</i> <i>Managing Director</i> <i>Brownsville</i>	<b>SECRETARY/TREASURER</b> <b>Maribel Bermudez Guerrero</b> <i>Rancho Viejo</i>
<b>VICE PRESIDENT</b> <b>Doak Dunkin</b> <i>Executive Director</i> <i>Dial Dunkin &amp; Associates</i> <i>Harlingen</i>	<b>Bill Martin</b> <i>Morgan Stanley, McAllen</i>
	<b>Jonathan R. Rebello</b> <i>BBVA-Compass, Brownsville</i>
	<b>Ex Officio - Georgiana Matz</b> <i>Valley Proud Environmental Council</i> <i>Harlingen</i>

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2011-2012

### TEXAS ADOPT-A-BEACH CLEAN UP

September 2011

### RIO REFORESTATION

10-1-2011/Rain Date 10-15-11

### TEXAS RECYCLES DAY

November 15, 2011

### CHRISTMAS COMPOST

12-26-11 to 01-07-12

### ALL VALLEY ARBOR MONTH

February 2012

### TEXAS ADOPT-A-BEACH CLEAN UP

(Winter Texans)

Late February 2012

### PROJECT REDIRECTORY

March 2012

### ALL VALLEY TRASH BASH

April 7, 2012

### TEXAS COUNTRY CLEAN UP

04-07-12 to 04-14-12

### TEXAS ADOPT-A-BEACH CLEAN UP

(Spring) April 2012

### TEXAS ADOPT-A-BEACH CLEAN UP

(Fall) September 2012

### ONGOING PROJECTS

- Captain Crab And The Beach Patrol
- Clean Beach Campaign
- and Puppet Show
- Anti-illegal Dumping
- "Don't Be Crude" Used Oil Recycling
- "Don't Bag It" Grass Clipping Campaign
- Arroyo Colorado Boat Cleanup



## VALLEY PROUD ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

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[www.valleyproud.org](http://www.valleyproud.org)

Email: [vpec@sbcglobal.net](mailto:vpec@sbcglobal.net)

Laura Maxwell, Valley Proud, Executive Director

## VALLEY PROUD SPONSORS:

- American Electric Power • Bargain Book • BBVA Compass Bank-Brownsville • Bobby & Robin Farris • Brownsville Herald • Cameron County Drainage District #5
- Cameron County Parks & Recreation Dept. • City of Brownsville • City of Harlingen • City of McAllen • City of San Benito • City of South Padre Island
- City of Weslaco • Coastal Current • H-E-B • KFRQ-FM/KKPS-FM/KVLY FM • KGBT-TV • KMBH-TV/FM/KHID-FM • KNVO-TV/FOX-TV • KRGV-TV • KVEO-TV
- L & F Distributors • La Feria News • Lamar Outdoor • Long Chilton, LLP • Los Fresnos News • Dr. & Mrs. M.M. MacRae • Mercedes Enterprise
- Mid Valley Town Crier • Port Isabel/SPI Press • Rio Grande Valley Sugar Growers • Rio Hondo News • San Benito News
- Texas Commission on Environmental Quality • Texas Forest Service • Texas General Land Office • U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service • Valley Morning Star

VALLEY PROUD MEMBERSHIPS: Valley Proud's operating funds come from cash, grants, and in-kind memberships from businesses, local governments, media, and individuals. Membership categories range from \$35 (Proud Friend) to \$2,500 (Proud Sponsor) or more and are tax-deductible. You are cordially invited to join by sending your check payable to Valley Proud Environmental Council, 513 East Jackson Street, Suite 304, Harlingen, Texas 78550. You may pay your membership online at the Valley Proud website using the secure Pay Pal option. If you have any questions, please call 956-412-8004 or visit our website: [www.valleyproud.org](http://www.valleyproud.org)

# MEMBERSHIP ENROLLMENT

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## Category of Membership

- Proud Friend..... \$35 - \$99
- Proud Neighbor..... \$100 - \$499
- Proud Partner..... \$500 - \$999
- Proud Benefactor.... \$1000 - \$2499
- Proud Sponsor..... \$2500 - and up

**PLEASE MAKE YOUR CHECK PAYABLE TO:**  
**VALLEY PROUD ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL**  
513 East Jackson Street, Suite 304, Harlingen, TX 78550, (956) 412-8004  
or Pay by Internet (Pay/Pal) Option: [www.valleyproud.org](http://www.valleyproud.org)

*Memberships are for one year  
Project Year: July - June*