

# Petition

the commission. person commission have Since the early 1900s all been elected at large. of the members of the five- If voters approve the

charter amendment, the city would be divided into seven districts with a city

commission member elected from each district.

The mayor and mayor pro tem positions would then be elected by the city commissioners.

The first election of the seven-member city commission would be held in 2012.

Initially, three of the members would serve a two-year term and four of the members would serve three-year terms to be determined by a drawing.

After that, all the city commission members would serve three-year terms with commissioners elected in staggered terms.

The U.S. Department of Justice would have to approve any change to the method of electing city commissioners.



Stopping for a picture at the Charlie Goetsch fundraiser this month were ORM members and other volunteers who worked at the event. Pictured from left are Tina Cavazos, Kleberg County Sheriff's Office community relations officer, Gina Smith, Jessica DeLeon, James Troia, Anthony Munoz, Audrey Rios, Carlos Lopez and Melina Torres.

## ORM

by encouraging productivity within the community."

Not only do they improve the lives of others, but also in reality they are role models who project their goodness, kindness and altruistic endeavors for people who need help.

Carlos Lopez serves as president and Samantha Smith serves as vice-president.

"It feels awesome and they let you know how grateful they are and send you thank you notes," Carlos replied as she shared his thoughts on helping others.

Carlos, 15, is a sophomore at the Santa Gertrudis Academy High School. He participates in sports and serves as the class parliamentarian. Samantha, 17, will be senior at H.M. King High School this school year. She is a member of the KHS Honor Society and has been taking dual credit classes at Texas A&M University-Kingsville. Besides, class and volunteer work, Samantha also works at H.E.B. She would like to work in the medical field in the future.

"I love helping people," she said. "There are a lot of good people here."

She credits her mom, Gina Smith, for being a volunteer role model herself.

Her mother has helped in the community, the school and the local hospital and she taught her daughter to become a volunteer. Gina Smith continues to help others.

"I helped distribute toys and books to all the children and friends in the hospital," Samantha said. She was eight years old.

Gina Smith and her daughter helped the Katrina people, the Fire Explorers, Special Olympics and wherever needed.

One person who said she did not have enough words to praise ORM members is Monica Pena. Lightning struck her home May 18 burning it to the ground in Riviera.

Pena and her family ended up at a local motel. That same afternoon Samantha and Gina Smith took her clothing and other items to the motel. ORM members collected donations for them. "She has been an inspiring child," Pena said.

A fundraiser was held for the Pena family on a hot blistering Saturday in Kingsville in front of a local business. Members of ORM handed out barbecue plates and worked all day.

"They could have been going to the movies, having fun but they were there all day," Pena said. "How many times are you going to have teenagers out there?"

"I am in awe of them," she said. "I am honored to know these kids. She credits Carlos because this is his creation and the inspiration of ORM. After the fire, they continued helping her."

"Gina and Samantha continue to call me," said Pena, who tears up as she talks about them and ORM members. Pena has worked for Child Protective Services for nine years. One of ORM's projects this month was helping with the Charlie Goetsch fundraiser held July 10 where they helped set up tables and worked where needed. Goetsch is recovering from injuries caused by a fall. He attended the fundraiser.

The idea to establish Operation Role Model is the brainchild of Carlos who implemented the concept locally.

The teenager's idea originated during a camp experience while in Colorado. Carlos participated in the Operation Purple Leadership Camp Program in June 2009 that was sponsored by the National Military Family Association. He was able to attend because his stepfather, James Troia, is in the military. Participants were asked to become involved in community services.

"When I went to the summer camp they challenged all of us to help out in the community," said Carlos, a quiet spoken teenager.

Carlos would bring this challenge home by volunteering for community services in Kingsville and surrounding areas. He would also encourage others to participate in ORM projects.

So, when he returned home from Colorado, he realized he needed a mentor. The family knew Kleberg County Sheriff Ed Mata and Carlos asked him if he could mentor the group.

"I had known him as a police officer since the fourth grade," Carlos said. "He was very agreeable and has been real helpful. The Kleberg County Sheriff's Office helps the ORM group by sometimes providing transportation and some of the officers often assist at the functions. The sheriff's office also provided the ORM T-shirts."

Carlos began his volunteer work in August 2009 when he helped with the National Night Out. He assisted the Sheriff's Office by delivering turkey dinners to homes where the people could not afford them.

Later he met Samantha Smith and she became involved in Operation Role Model in December. Carlos' mother, Bonita Troia, and Samantha's mother, Gina Smith, have been very supportive of their children's endeavors and assisted during the events. Both sets of parents continued to work with their children.

The Sheriff's office sponsored a brunch for the elderly at the K.C. Hall and KISD special education students were also invited in December. Carlos, Samantha, their parents and some of the ORM members assisted with this function.

By February of 2010 ORM membership increased. They assisted with the Fiesta de Los Ninos, a fundraiser for Driscoll

Children's Hospital, held at the American Bank Center in Corpus Christi. The members set up 400 tables at that event and helped wherever they were needed. The Driscoll staff were so impressed with them that they gave them tickets to an Ice Rays game.

ORM group continued making a difference in people's lives. They traveled to Flour Bluff with some Kingsville Independent School District students who participated in a special Olympic event in April. Participants ranged from a second grader to adults from MHMR.

"We monitored them," Carlos said, "We were their cheerleaders."

They have also participated in the PDAP walk, Cinco de Mayo, and a Blue Mass that was sponsored by the Kleberg County Sheriff's Office. The Blue Mass held in May honored military and law enforcement entities. ORM members helped with the dinner by setting up the tables and serving the food.

This month they also helped with the Wheelathon event held at the Naval Air Station. ORM members helped set up the event where children bought their bicycles, scooters and skateboards.

Mata, like many of the adults who know these teenagers, echo the same praises for their commitment to help others. "They are kids being kids who want to do something constructive," Mata said.

"They give inspiration to others and will be good leaders in our community in the future," Mata said.

He was very receptive to the idea of the Kleberg County Sheriff Office being the mentor of Operation Role Model. Mata said ORM model was their idea and they ran with the program. He praises both the young members and their parents who are supportive and volunteer to work at events.

ORM members also include Martin Clement, Patrick Lopez, George Bouakl, Ricardo Rios, Daniela Quezada, Anthony Munoz, Jessica De Leon, Celeste Resendez, Bianca Salinas, Catherine Cantu, Audrey Rios, John Perez, and Josh Perez.

"We welcome anyone ages 14 to 21 to be role models and join our group," Samantha said. The group has about 15 members and tries to work on as many projects as possible.

"They must have a willingness to be involved and are asked to live up to role model expectations," she said. "Keep up grades, stay out of trouble and have a positive attitude."

Another printed statement on the ORM flyer is "Operation Role Model is a mentoring program that promotes leadership which having a great time."

More information can be obtained with through their operationrolemodel@0 e-mail.



Carlos Lopez, Operation Role Model president, and Samantha Smith, vice-president, and other members set up 400 tables at Driscoll Children's Hospital fundraiser in Corpus Christi. This volunteer project in February has been many of the ORM's projects.



Carlos Lopez, Operation Role Model president, helps a man carry a fan to his cart this summer.



SOLDIER'S WELCOME — Kleberg County resident Monica Pena, who lost her entire home and belongings in a fire in May, was so happy to see the return of her son Wyatt Pena, who is currently on leave from his second tour in Iraq. The family had a joyful reunion on Monday. Pictured from left, front row, are Juanito and Xavier Gonzalez, cousins; back row, Joshua and Jacob Gonzalez, cousins; Eliza Gonzalez, aunt; Wyatt, Monica, and Enedina Pena, paternal aunt. (Photo by Erika Hernandez)

## Despite tragedy, there is joy at the Pena household

By Erika Hernandez

Monica Pena, a victim of a recent fire in Riviera, which left her family without a home, was overjoyed Monday when her son, Wyatt, came home for a two-week leave from his second tour in Iraq.

Wyatt, 24, is a 2004 graduate of H.M. King High and enlisted in the U.S. Army in November 2005. This was his first time back in Kingsville since the fire claimed his family home.

"A lot has changed, but I'm glad to be home either way," he said. "I plan on spending a lot of time with my family and I'm grateful for how people in the area have been so helpful."

The family has found a temporary home in Kingsville and is planning on returning to Riviera in the coming months.

A 32 by 32 foot structure was donated from Coastal Bend Fellowship immediately after the fire and was moved to Riviera on Thursday.

The family is planning on adding on a bathroom and kitchen to the structure as soon as possible.

Pena said she is continually overwhelmed by the amount of assistance she has received from the community.

"Everyone has been so wonderful to my family and I am so appreciative for everything," she said.

She said that materials including cabinets and lumber from old Navy housing units, which are currently being demolished, were donated to her family.

Officials from the Brown Villa public housing units, which are also being demolished, donated storm windows to Pena for their new home.

"The list of people and organizations that have helped us is endless," Pena said. "I am so proud to live in Kleberg County among the generous people who have shown nothing but support."

Family and friends will do the construction of the bathroom and kitchen, and Pena said someone has offered to do the plumbing for free once the structure is complete.

"Right now we are in the process of looking for lumber or anyone who can get us a good deal on lumber so that we can get building as soon as possible," Pena said.

Anyone wishing to contact Pena can reach her at (361) 522-4034.

Pena appeared before the Kleberg County Commissioner's Court last month and asked the court to consider action on the issue of fire department response in rural areas.

At the meeting, Pct. 3 Commissioner Roy Cantu took the primary action and called for a committee of county commissioners to be assembled as soon as possible so that they can further discuss the issue and implement ideas effectively.

Pena said she plans to follow up on the issue soon to see if any progress has been made.

## Vet Tech

care needs for this region. For the university, it will improve our teaching capacity in a critical area and provide students that graduate in this area with the credentials to obtain high quality jobs.

"It also will provide help to the entire university community increasing our research capabilities with veterinarians on staff and enhancing our ability to do more animal disease work that affects South Texas livestock and wildlife," Rasmussen added.

The veterinary technology program will provide a student with a four-year bachelor's degree upon completion, which will make graduated eligible to take the examination to become a registered veterinary technologist.

The job market is growing for veterinary technologists, projected to increase by 41 percent by 2016. In addition to an increasing demand working with veterinarians, technologists could find jobs with biomedical research firms, zoological and other wildlife facilities, diagnostic laboratories, veterinary supply companies, humane societies, food and drug manufacturing companies, animal control facilities, equine breeding farms and cattle feedlots.

In addition to veterinary medicine expertise, graduates of the program will be trained to deal with the business aspects of running a veterinary clinic.

Since graduates of the A&M-Kingsville program will have the opportunity to take several wildlife courses as electives, they will be better prepared to deal with free-ranging wildlife-related veterinary issues that most other veterinary technologists from other degree programs. This unique wildlife training should make graduates very competitive for jobs with state and federal agencies and universities that deal with wildlife disease issues and research.

The proposed program at Texas A&M-Kingsville will not duplicate any existing programs in Texas because none of the four-year colleges and universities in the state offer a four-year degree. Five community and junior colleges and one four-year university offer veterinary technician associate degrees. There are only 16 four-year universities and colleges in the nation that offer a bachelor's degree in veterinary technology and almost all of these institutions are in the Northeast, Midwest and Southeast; of these, only two specialize in large animal medicine.

It is projected that around 19 students will be admitted the first year, growing to about 73 by the fifth year. It is estimated that no more than 30 new students will be admitted each year.