



PANAMERICANA



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PPAS**

Desiree Gutierrez, Editor

FIRST YEAR STUDENTS ENJOY EXPERIENCE AT PAN AM

*By Kate
Thompson, Senior*

For 17-year-old Meaghan Pesqueira, coming to Presbyterian Pan American School from the seventh largest city in the country--San Antonio, has been nothing short of different.

"I come from this big city and now I am in the middle of nowhere," said Pesqueira, junior and first year student, "But I like it." Pesqueira's parents did not want her to attend a public school and wanted to prepare her for her future.

"It is hard to be away from my family," Pesqueira said. "But I like how everyone is treated equally and everyone is friends here. It was nothing like that at my other school."

PPAS' student body is small but has grown since it first started in 1912. The school receives an average of 20-40 new students each year, said Joe Garcia, Director of Admissions.

"I like that it is a small school. We are like a family," said Christian Ortiz, 15-year-old sophomore and first year student.

Ortiz is from Kingsville and attended Memorial Middle School but moved to Valle Hermosa, Mexico when he was 13. His father took a job there so Ortiz lived there for two years. He

moved back to Kingsville in August and is living on campus.

"I came back because I didn't like it there," he said. "I didn't speak Spanish and my classes were difficult for me. I felt out of place. At PPAS, we are a family and I have friends here."

Rodrigo Palmas, 17-year-old senior, said PPAS is



*From Left, Meaghan Pesqueira,
Christian Ortiz and
Rodrigo Palmas*

different from his former school in McAllen. He is a first year student and is originally from San Luis Potosi, Mexico. His parents decided to move back to San Luis Potosi but Palmas wanted to stay in the U.S. so he transferred.

"There are no clicks here, everyone gets along with everyone," Palmas said. "And I like living here with all my friends."

Students at PPAS are from different parts of the world, but most from Mexico. The school also has students from South Korea, Taiwan, Costa Rica, India, Ethiopia, Guatemala,

Nicaragua, Thailand, Peru and the United States, specifically cities in Texas such as Corpus Christi, Victoria, McAllen and Houston.

Many attend to learn or improve their English, receive an American diploma and/or attend a U.S. college. Recently more native English speakers are joining the PPAS family.

"I speak English and Spanish, but it doesn't hurt to come and improve my skills," Palmas said.

Pesqueira, Palmas, and Ortiz agree that it was difficult at first, but have come to enjoy their experience.

"At first it was hard making my bed every single day but now I have to or else, I get my roommates and myself a low grade," she said. "But I really like it here—having a roommate, eating here and being responsible for myself"

Along with school, these students are involved in athletics and plan to participate in clubs and organizations on campus. "I am in cross country and a dual credit student. I love to be busy," Palmas said.

Palmas is enrolled in American government and English 1301 at Coastal Bend College in Kingsville.

Ortiz plays soccer and hopes to be a part of another state championship.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

~DR. JAMES MATTHEWS

We take it for granted that when we turn on the tap, water will be there. We assume that when we flip a switch, the lights will come on. Systems that are absolutely necessary for modern existence – water, sewers, gas, electricity, roads, bridges, telephones — are so invisible that we do not even think about them...until they aren't there. Just try navigating in most cities with the traffic lights off. Even worse, imagine the confusion that occurs when telephones or computers go down...we are paralyzed.

Seems like we hear a lot lately about INFRASTRUCTURE. A bridge in Minneapolis falls down and everyone talks, at least for a few days about the need to fix our aging infrastructure. In physics it's called "entropy" which simply means all systems run down. At some point, usually when people quit counting birthdays, our bodies start showing the signs of wear and tear...joints creek and muscles sag. If you drive much, you've probably

hit a pothole or two in the last few days. And if you own a house, you no doubt have felt the pocket-book crunch caused by a leaky roof or worn out water heater.

What's all this have to do with a mission school in South Texas? ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING! The campus built by Dr. Reisner and a group of dedicated Presbyterians in the late 1950s is showing its age... cracks have appeared in some brick walls, fences do not always keep the cows in, and the sewers from time to time even stop flowing.

We don't have bridges in danger of falling down, simply because we don't have any bridges, but our campus infrastructure is in about the same shape as our nation's infrastructure.

In I Corinthians, when the Apostle Paul compared himself to a builder laying a foundation, he was talking about infrastructure, about the invisible system which supports structures which are seen.

"For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

A few decades ago, our nation celebrated two hundred years and we spent some time and money fixing things. We beautified the roadways and cleaned up the canals, but wouldn't you know things didn't stay fixed. In a few years, Presbyterian Pan American School will celebrate one hundred years and we are very conscious that things need to be fixed up too. This fall, in fact, we will hear the roar of heavy equipment digging ditches for new sewers, new water pipes and gas lines. In order to rebuild the campus to meet the needs of students in our second century we must first attend to the very unglamorous business of redoing the infrastructure. And as we do that we must keep our eyes fixed on the Master Builder who alone guarantees that while all earthly systems run down, God's Word endures.

SCHOLARSHIP PROFILE

~JAVIER & HECTOR VILLEGAS



J u n i o r
J a v i e r
V i l l e g a s
and young-
er brother
H e c t o r ,
both stu-
dents at

Presbyterian Pan American School, resemble each other in appearance and personality.

The Mexico City natives both share a passion for basketball, family, friends and religion.

Javier, 17, and Hector, 16-year-old sophomore, are both on the school's basketball team.

"I love the sport," Hector said. "I have a lot of fun playing. I love to win, that's the best thing. And my brother

and I, we make a good couple. We understand each other."

Hector, who is in his second year at Pan Am, has been playing basketball for 10 years. Javier, a third year student, is the 2008-2009 junior class president, volleyball manager and is also a cross country runner.

The Villegas brothers, who found out about Pan Am through their church, both agree that their favorite part about the school is the people.

"After a period of time, you become closer so they become like your family," Javier said. "You care about them, you love them."

Javier has described his experience at Pan Am as a blessing for him and his family. It's been great and the best experience ever, he said.

Although the two have time before they graduate, both have set goals for themselves. Hector wants to study engineering while Javier simply wants to continue his education.

"I want to go here in the U.S. if it's God's will," he said, "but if not, I'll go back home. I want to make an impact in this world. I want people to remember my name and change the world for good. I want to put the name of God, family, and school on high. I want to become a good man."

Religion definitely plays a part in the lives of the Villegas'.

"I try to be a better person everyday" Javier said. "I have God in my heart; he allows me to share his love with everybody. Be brave and strong and trust the Lord."

PAN AMERICAN SCHOOL ALUMNI ~Paul Morales & Norma Gutierrez de Morales

After more than 30 years apart, two Presbyterian Pan American School graduates and high school sweethearts reunited on classmates.com and started their relationship where they left off in 1974.

"We dated my senior year, it was wonderful," said Paul Morales, Class of 1974. "I knew then that she was the love of my life, but distance and separation kept us apart."

Paul dated Norma Gutierrez, Class of 1975, who was a year younger.

Paul first came to Pan Am when he was 14 in 1970.

"I really was scared to be leaving home, but also looked forward to the new opportunities and challenges before me," he said. "The student body was small but it made it feel like one big family of brothers and sisters."

Norma came to Pan Am in 1972. "I was very excited to study there,"



From left, Priscilla Diaz '73', Fernando Montalvo and his wife Roxana, '74', Blanca Avendano '73', Ana Elsa Ruvalcaba '74', Paul & Norma, Edna Rangel '74', Suzanne Morales, Clelia Lopez de Moreno '74', Max Avendano '73'.

she said. "And having friends from Mexico helped a lot."

While attending Pan Am, Paul participated in drama, soccer, basketball, choir and track and field.

After Paul graduated, he got a summer job in Brownsville to be close to Norma but his family moved back to the U.S. and their relationship ended.

Paul started at Midland Lutheran College in Fremont, Nebraska, where he double majored in

Communication Arts and Spanish.

In college, he was part of yearbook, tennis, cross country, drama and the newspaper staff as Sports Editor.

Norma attended college at Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey and majored in business administration-accounting. She attended for three years, married and had three children.

After Paul graduated in 1980, he went to Nashville, Tennessee for management training at the United Methodist Publishing House, where he has been employed for 28 years.

Paul and Norma began dating again in November of 2006 and married July 12, 2008 in Monterrey, Mexico where several former Pan Am classmates attended. The couple now resides in Sun City, Arizona.

PAN AMERICAN SCHOOL REACHES OUT TO ALUMNI

Twenty years after graduation, David Franco, a member of the Presbyterian Pan American School Class of 1982, felt cut off from his friends and classmates. But as an IT professional he knew exactly what to do. He created a website, a website designed explicitly for PPAS alumni.

David began by contacting a few of his closest friends, who helped him to spread the word.

The site has now grown to over 370 members.

David has also posted the most recent *PanAmericana* school newslet-

ter to the website, which has received 114 hits since this past July. David will continue to post the newsletters as well as the school's student newspaper, The Eagle X-Press.

Currently, the most used feature of the website is the "private message" portion which allows members to send messages back and forth to one another.

If you are not already a member, please visit <http://ppasalumni.org>.



We Need Your Help!

We are updating our database and want to be able to share news about Pan American School with our alums. But, we have lost track of many of our former students and need your help in finding them.

Do you have names, e-mail addresses, mailing addresses, or phone numbers for friends and former classmates that you would be willing to share with us? If so, please email this information to

Melissa Windham at mwindham@ppas.org.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

~ELISA GODINEZ

In May of 2008, at Presbyterian Pan American School's graduation ceremony, Elisa Godinez, a junior then, was named Student of the Year.

"When I was announced Student of the Year, I couldn't believe it. I was overwhelmed with so many emotions. I felt really happy and proud of myself," said Elisa, now a senior. "That was a way to praise God and to thank my parents for all the things that they have done for me and for giving me the opportunity to be here. I was glad that all my effort, work and time were rewarded."

The award is typically presented to a student who is not a senior—one who best represents the mission of Presbyterian Pan American School. This student demonstrates stability in academic endeavors, leadership in worship, responsible citizenship in the Pan American community and leadership in activities that enhance the lives of all the members of the Pan Am family.

The 17-year-old Matamoros native does demonstrate the mission of the school, specifically forming young Christian leaders because Elisa hopes to work in ministry after college.

"It is God's will. My future is up to God. I lay my life with him," she said. "And I want a job that I love, a job that would not be like a job but a hobby for me. If I am doing what I love, I will never get tired of it."

Elisa first came to Pan Am in July of 2006 to receive an education in the United States and learn English.

Elisa left her parents, Santiago, an engineer, and Blanca, a homemaker, along with brothers, Santiago, 21, and Samuel, 12, but joined her sister Raquel, who is a year older.



"I have always felt at home at Pan Am. It was easy for me because my sister was here," she said. "And it has been a great experience. It is something that happens once in a lifetime and I take advantage of it and enjoy every minute of it."

Although Elisa keeps busy with her class schedule including chemistry and newspaper which are the most fun for her, she still manages to make time for athletics including sports such as volleyball, basketball and cross country. Elisa is also part of Pan Am's John A. Mackay National Honor Society Chapter and this past summer, she joined the lifeguard team. She is also an alto on the Morris Chapel Choir and Worship Committee.

"I love music so I play the piano and sing whenever I can," she said.

And religion plays a very important role in Elisa's life, who attends service on campus and at First Baptist Church in Kingsville

"I like Church because I get to praise my God and savior. It keeps my spiritual life growing," she said. "I love God, he is everything for me and he deserves my praising. I dedicate my life for him. I live for him."

For Elisa, the donors who give financial gifts for Pan Am's annual budget are also important to her but to countless students, faculty, families and Christians in general.

"Maybe it is their, the donors calling from God," she said. "And I would like to give a thousand thanks. God Bless You all. If it weren't for you, I wouldn't be here. God will pay you back."

After Elisa graduates in May of 2009, she plans to study architectural or civil engineering in the U.S. She has narrowed her choices to Texas A&M University-College Station, Texas A&M University-Kingsville or the University of Texas-Austin.

"Pan Am changed my life," she said. "It made me realize about a bunch of things like the value of our families back home. It helps to realize what you have, to make yourself a responsible person and to make decisions by yourself, on your own. It is the greatest experience I've ever had and the best three years of my life."

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STAFF SPOTLIGHT ~ELLIE PEREZ

For Ellie Perez, of Edinburg, accepting the position of Counselor and Testing Coordinator at Presbyterian Pan American School was her calling.

“I wasn’t even searching for a job. I don’t know what had me apply. It was nothing I was seeking, it just fell into my lap,” she said.

The 2003 graduate of Texas A&M University-Kingsville received her bachelor’s degree in speech. She has a master’s degree in education with certification in special education and counseling and guidance. She is a certified diagnostician and is working towards her doctorate.

She began teaching four years ago at Driscoll Independent School District as a special education teacher and then started at Pan Am in July of 2006.

“What sold me were the students,” she said. They were all hugs and kisses. They are so loving and caring.”

At Pan Am, Ellie especially enjoys the unity of the school.



“The staff and students have one vision and that is to help students succeed,” Ellie said. “The students are academically driven, well-mannered, and respectful and have a go-getting attitude when it comes to education.” Part of the counseling department’s responsibility is handling the dual credit program, which includes 14 students this year taking classes at Coastal Bend College in Kingsville.

“Dual credit provides academic opportunities to high school students who are ready for the challenges of

university coursework,” she said. “I wish these students the best of luck throughout their college success.”

This year, Ellie has taken on the role of cheerleading coach, which she is familiar with because she cheered for TAMUK in 2000.

When Ellie is not at school, she can be found with her two horses. She also enjoys hunting, fishing and camping with her husband and family.

“A good school is one whose main focus is teaching kids and putting them first,” she said. “It is when the students are the emphasis and the priority to everyday teaching. Pan Am is a good school, from worship in the evenings, to athletics, to weekend activities, to 24/7 dorm staff and the unconditional love from our teachers and administration. And as long as I am working here, I will continue to enforce the mission of building young Christian leaders. I am truly trying to live up to that.”