

# Tourism spending uptick of \$9M studied at county meeting

**KIMBERLY RUBIO**

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Tourism contributions to the Uvalde County economy grew by more than 11 percent in 2017 to total \$83 million, according to Annabell McNew, executive director of Texas Hill Country River Region.

McNew presented the organization's quarterly report to Uvalde County Commissioners on Tuesday, when the county's governing body met for a regularly-scheduled meeting at the Uvalde County

Courthouse. According to McNew, purchases made by travelers during trips to Uvalde County in 2017 totaled \$83 million.

"That's an 11.6 percent gain over 2016, which was reported at \$74 million," McNew said, noting that the tourism industry directly provided 740 jobs in Uvalde County last year.

"Texas Hill Country River Region continues to stay busy providing excellent services for Uvalde

PLEASE SEE **REPORT**, PAGE 22

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for harboring a fugitive  
and the other for tamper-

in anger, 38th Judicial  
District Attorney Daniel

Cook alleged violence,  
speaking one month after

igators set out to serve  
dozens of warrants.

## REPORT: Tourism spending, tax money helps promote area

FROM PAGE 1

County tourism," McNew said. "We recently had our annual membership meeting and board election, at which the public was invited for dinner and an overview of our efforts."

Board members are Melissa Bates, president; Tim Hester, vice president; Cassandra Perry, secretary; Gabe Gonzales, treasurer; Rob Fayle, member; Mary Murphy, member; and Chase Roosa, member.

Texas River Region staff includes McNew, Devan Caballero, executive assistant/visitors center manager; and Katie Loney, seasonal/part-time receptionist.

For the first quarter of 2018, Texas Hill Country River Region has collected

\$36,694 in hotel motel occupancy tax.

By this time last year, the region had collected \$48,450; 2016, \$51,731; 2015, \$33,847; 2014, \$35,519; 2013, \$42,364; 2012, \$21,426; 2011, \$19,256; and 2010, \$16,103.

Year to end, \$390,032 was received in 2010; 2011, \$323,255; 2012, \$448,142; 2013, \$488,357; 2014, \$537,353; 2015, \$635,927; 2016, \$724,125; and 2017, \$727,439.

Data for 2016-2018 is incomplete pending additional information for several businesses.

"In recent years, Uvalde County HOT tax revenue has seen tremendous growth under the partnership with Texas Hill Country River Region. This trend is a reflection

of HOT dollars at work. While collections from 2016-17 are still incomplete, there was at least a 13.87 percent increase in total collections in 2016 and 2015. We expect that percentage to grow, as reports and revenue are collected from previous years," McNew said.

Texas Hill Country River Region is tasked with promoting tourism to Uvalde County and, more specifically, the river region, where lodging owners are assessed a 4 percent tax on overnight stays. That money is remitted to the county, which allocates 74 percent to Texas Hill Country River Region and retains 26 percent. Most of the county's portion is allocated for river cleanup activities.

Events held in the river region include Freedom Fest BBQ Cook-off, Rio Frio Fest, Easter Tejano Fest, Fenders and Food Trucks on the Frio/River Road Market Fest, Sabinal Wild Hog Festival, Utopia

Ranch Rodeo, Bud Priddly Fishing Tournament, Cinco de Mayor River Road Market Fest and Utopia Fireworks.

Also, July Jam fest, Frio River Trash Bash, Fall River Road Market Fest and Pumpkin Patch, Fall on the Frio BBQ Cook-off, Birdie Golf Tournament, Sky high for Saint Judge Golf Tournament, Neal's Haunted Hayrides, Utopia Fall Arts and Crafts Fair, Neal's Thanksgiving Feast, Christmas in Concan River Road, Market Fest and Ice Skating Rink and Fall/winter concert series.

"THCRR's advertising budget requires strategic and targeted media buys across mediums with proven success to reinforce brand awareness," McNew said.

Past media purchases include Uvalde Leader-News, KSAT TV, Texas Highways Magazine, Texas Monthly Magazine, San Antonio Express News, Houston Chronicle, Del Rio Grande Magazine, Hill Country Sun, Golf Digest and Wall Street Journal.

In 2011, the Texas Legislative session included a section in the State Tax Code allowing for Uvalde County to use 25 percent of HOT tax revenue for river cleanup. Under this section, THCRR has worked with Uvalde County to develop and manage a river cleanup program.

Between March and May, 154 volunteers cleaned for 22 hours, which benefitted nine non-profit organizations. More than 1,000 pounds of trash was collected.



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# SUMMER

City of Uvalde swimming pool now open to public

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# MILITARY SERVICE

Uvalde High grad serves in U.S. Navy aboard USS Emory S. Land in Pacific

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# CRIME

Twelve year prison sentence for Cook, second defendant in child's homicide

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ONE SECTION, 22 PAGES

SUNDAY, JUNE 3, 2018

VOL. 138 NO. 23 \$1.00

### How happy are UCISD employees?

JENNIFER FRY  
STAFF WRITER

Of the 683 respondents of the Uvalde Consolidated Independent School District employment survey, 97 percent say they enjoy their jobs, though only 50 percent believe their pay is fair.

Janelle Gillory, Texas

Association of School Boards employee data services manager, presented Uvalde Consolidated Independent School District trustees with the results from the most recent employee satisfaction survey during the board meeting held May 21. The purpose of the survey is to help district admin-

istrators understand how employees think about certain issues and to assess their general contentment on the job.

All UCISD employees were invited to participate using either an online submission portal or a paper questionnaire. There was a 91 percent response rate among employees.

#### SURVEY RESULTS

Ninety-eight percent of respondents agreed that the work they do within the district is meaningful, which has a direct impact on employee satisfaction. Of respondents, 97 percent said they enjoyed what they did, another factor in satisfaction.

Last year, the numbers

were similar. Ninety-seven percent said their work was meaningful and 96 percent agreed that they did. At that time, 96 percent of respondents also said the work they did was challenging to them.

In this year's survey, respondents' opinions of their work environment

were mostly favorable as well. Eighty-seven percent felt they worked in a safe environment; the same amount also agreed that they are satisfied with the amount of leave time they receive, as well as that they receive adequate help with benefits questions.

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PLEASE SEE REPORT, PAGE 22



The Utopia-based Young Guns participate in mugging and penning during the annual Utopia Ranch Rodeo held at the park arena. The event was staged May 27, and participants included (left to right) Slade Bomer, Will Pollock and Cooper Hurt.

### Driver in fatal crash awaits punishment

KIMBERLY RUBIO  
ASSISTANT EDITOR

A visibly shaken Jack Young exited the Uvalde County Justice Center Thursday morning having pleaded no contest to 14 two-count indictments for the Concan-area crash that killed 13 people on

March 29, 2017. The now-21-year-old is facing up to 270 years in prison, but he will not learn his fate until November.

Young, who is from Leakey, neither disputes nor admits to the crime with the plea, but he gives up his right to a trial by jury.

Young's plea comes three weeks after he was arrested for violating the terms of his pre-trial release agreement by testing positive for Tetrahydrocannabinol, a chemical compound in cannabis. He was later released after posting a \$30,000 surety bond, and appeared in court Thursday at 10 a.m.

Also present for Young's court appearance was Charlotte Banks, the

PLEASE SEE CRASH, PAGE 22



Two friends pause from play to pose for a picture in the city of Uvalde swimming pool. The young children visited the pool Thursday afternoon when temperatures reached a high of 99.

### Cook's sentencing in child's death brings case to close

KIMBERLY RUBIO  
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Cel'ves N. Cook pleaded guilty Thursday to tampering with evidence, specifically throwing a blanket over 4-year-old Davaughn Rodriguez's dead body on the morning of Dec. 11, 2011.

Cook agreed to serve 12 years in prison for the crime.

The 12-year sentence will run concurrently with a 10-year sentence also handed down Thursday by presiding 38th Judicial District Judge Camille DuBose for an unrelated drug possession charge.

Cook, who appeared in the Uvalde County Justice Center at noon, will receive credit for the nearly three years he served in the Uvalde County Jail between January of 2014 and September of 2017.

Cook was arrested

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#### AREA DEATHS/PAGE 5

Steven T. Howard  
Charlotte Sweet

2018 TO DATE	2.45
2017 SAME PERIOD	11.17
2016 SAME PERIOD	14.21
114 YEAR AVERAGE	9.44
EDWARDS ADJUSTER	870.3
PREVIOUS LEVEL	870.5
2017 SAME PERIOD	875.2



TODAY  
99  
73

OBSERVED	INSIDE
HIGH LOW RAIN	CLASSIFIEDS 18-21
SUN 98 68 0.00	FARM 11
MON 100 72 0.00	LIFESTYLES 4-5
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