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### HEARING THE MUSIC LOUD AND CLEAR

Bells of Brownsville church have plenty of history: 7C

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### HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

## High school football goes beyond the holy lines

McALLEN — Football season literally kicks off tonight with a full schedule of games around the Rio Grande Valley.

Young men in gladiator-type uniforms, the sounds of cracking helmets, the pageantry of high school marching bands and the wonderful taste of concession stand food will all be in place to create what is special in Texas on Friday night.

It's almost perfect. Almost, that is. This year, a group of federal judges from New Orleans has decided that pregame, student-led prayer over the public address system has no place at football games. They ruled that prayer may be given at serious, more solemn events such as graduations, but that prayer at a football game was inappropriate. Hub?

What's more serious in Texas than high school football? Stadiums are like palaces. Coaches are our highest paid "educators." Star players are treated like royalty. Many games are revised, something unheard of in other states. School football budgets are enormous and good tickets to a Friday night game are almost as good as gold.

Sometimes, an entire town's ambitions are tied to the success or failure of its football team. Just ask Jokes in small towns like Refugio, Stephenville or even La Joya.

The 5th U.S. Court of Appeals in New Orleans ruled that a football game was not a solemn event where student-led prayer might be welcomed. But shouldn't the community decide that and not a court several hundred miles away? If the teams and everyone in the community is fine with prayer at their home games, why shouldn't it be said?

But the judges' ruling doesn't seem to be centered on whether anyone would be offended by Christian prayer because apparently it's fine to do it at a more somber event such as graduation. What

# Shop 'til you drop



**How Bazaar:** Above, shoppers mill about at the Bargain Bazaar Sunday in McAllen while below, Horacio Lopez, a vendor at the Bargain Bazaar, begins the process of changing the mold of a person's hand into a personal hand sculpture. Lopez's handwork is one of a multitude of items, ranging from shoes to crafts, that can be found at various bazaars in the Rio Grande Valley.

## Bazaars provide break from mainstream shopping

By JULIA D. NAVA  
The Monitor

McALLEN — As high-profile national chains continue to target McAllen with new stores and high-ticket items, some local businessmen believe they have an alternative: bazaars.

They are an age-old idea, but proving to be popular in modern-day McAllen.

Not to be confused with their outdoor cousin — the flea market — the indoor bazaars are sort of an upscale version of that, with such extras as air conditioning, good parking and controlled atmosphere.

Several have popped up in Hidalgo County over the last several years. In McAllen, more than 3,000 shoppers crowd one bazaar each weekend, and that is good for business, merchants said.

Kendall Hill of Donna has been renting space at the Bargain Bazaar on the north side of Nolana Loop and 23rd Street for the last two years, selling herbs and vitamins. Her \$1,000 monthly profits show that a facility like this is a perfect place to start a business.

"A bazaar like this provides a much low-over head, lots of walk-by traffic, and you can meet and attract new customers," Hill said. "It's a great place to start a business."

And many Rio Grande Valley residents have. They lease space from the bazaars and sell their wares from that space along with many other merchants. Shoppers can find everything from clothes, jewelry, furniture and even food at the Bargain and Bicentennial bazaars in McAllen and the Edinburg Bazaar on South Business 281.

Back Rogers, owner of the Bargain Bazaar, said the facilities are beneficial for both the merchants and the shoppers.

"For those who have a regular job during the week, this gives them additional income by working on the weekends," Rogers said. "People like to shop here because of the wide variety of items on sale."

See BAZAAR page 8C

### RETAIL

## Ticketmaster likes quality of job-seekers

By STEVE CANNON  
The Monitor

PHARR — Officials from Ticketmaster Group Inc. said Thursday they were convinced to open a 500-person call center in the Rio Grande Valley based on the quality of job applicants they saw in the area.

Earlier this year, Ticketmaster, the world's largest provider of automated ticketing services, placed newspaper ads and interviewed 200 job applicants in McAllen to determine whether to set up a local office.

During a ceremony at the Pharr Economic Development Corp., Brian Delaney, the company's executive vice president for call centers, said local applicants showed strong communication skills in both English and Spanish.

"What brought McAllen and Pharr over the top was the workforce," Delaney said. "We try to gauge the aptitudes of people during those interviews and this market scored well."

Ticketmaster was especially attracted by the Spanish-speaking ability of many job applicants.

"We have numerous clients who need Spanish-language services," Delaney said. "We could conceivably centralize those services here."

While initial hiring for the call center, slated to open at the end of this year or beginning of the next, will total 561 workers, Delaney said the company could boost its workforce to 800 if the center expands.

Applicants for managerial positions can apply at local Texas Workforce Commission offices, while people seeking positions as customer service representatives can apply at a Sept. 25 job fair to be held at Pharr International Convention Center.

Starting salaries at the call center will be \$6.50 per hour.

Delaney said the united efforts of Pharr and McAllen, who will pay Ticketmaster \$600,000 over two years for job creation, helped bring the company to South Texas.

"Because they pooled their resources, that helped make this happen," Delaney said. "I can't think of any other case that I've been involved in where cities have worked together in that way."

Pharr officials have high hopes that Ticketmaster, together with a 1,000-person call center to be opened by Cincinnati-based Convergys Corp., will help drive economic growth in their city.

"I hope (it) will be successful because there is a line of people already waiting for jobs," said Pharr Mayor Ricardo Medina.