

MARCH/APRIL 2020



VTX1 Companies

# COMPASS

VOL. 1, NO. 2

## SMART SCOUTS

Expansion  
increases STEM  
offerings at  
Camp Perry

### DOLLARS AND SENSE

Online tools can help you  
manage your money

### UNLIMITED LEARNING

Broadband creates education  
opportunities



# The 2020 census matters for South Texas



**DAVE OSBORN**  
Chief Executive Officer

**H**ow important is the 2020 census? For areas like ours, \$675 billion is at stake.

One of the key pieces of mail you will receive in 2020 is the postcard the U.S. Census Bureau will mail to addresses in Texas and across the country. Why does the census matter to your Internet and telephone provider and why am I using this space to encourage you to participate?

Simply put, South Texas has a lot to gain from accurate census numbers — and a lot to lose if we aren't all counted.

The risks and benefits are in three main areas dependent on census data: government funding, political representation and statistics for economic growth.

According to the Census Bureau, census data determines the spending of more than \$675 billion in federal funds. That can mean anything from schools, roads and equipment for first responders to grants for expanding our

“Simply put, South Texas has a lot to gain from accurate census numbers — and a lot to lose if we aren't all counted.”

broadband network or programs that help those in need. Many of these projects seek to do the most good for the most people — and if we don't have an accurate count, funding may go elsewhere.

As you may have heard in political news, the census data is used to draw and redraw districts for state and federal lawmakers. The number of congressmen and congresswomen we have representing Texas is dependent on our population. If we don't count our population accurately, we run the risk of losing representation in Congress to other states that may have different interests than our own.

The same thing is true on a more local level in the state legislature. If counties in our region are under-counted, we could lose representation and have a more difficult time making our area's concerns heard in Austin.

Lastly, our area's population is a key factor in the statistics businesses use when considering market viability. Whether a fast-food restaurant or an industrial plant, corporate managers are looking at population data when it comes to customer base, workforce and market potential. As someone who cares deeply about our area, I hope you'll take those few minutes of time to make sure to participate in the census.

The Census Bureau is making things simple, quick and easy for everyone to be counted by incorporating a postcard mailing for your convenience.

Our communities are counting on you. To learn more, visit [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).



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**\*Hours of Operation:**

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Mon.-Fri. • 8 a.m.-7 p.m.
- VTCL & Fiber Tech Support:  
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- Wireless Tech Support:  
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**\*\*Tech Support Hours may vary from those listed above.**

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On the Cover:



Scouts, such as Gabriela Alvarez, who visit Camp Perry will have more STEM programs after the completion of an expansion.  
See story Page 12.

# STAY SAFE THIS SPRING



Along with longer days, warmer weather and blossoming flowers, spring often brings severe weather — including lightning, strong wind and hail.

**Here are a few tips for protecting your loved ones and your home.**

## BEFORE THE STORM

- » During a storm, using electronics plugged into your home's electrical system can be dangerous. Charge all phones or other communications devices before inclement weather occurs.
- » Purchase lightning rods, surge protectors or lightning protection systems to safeguard home electronics or appliances.
- » Identify safe areas in your home, workplaces or other areas you frequent and discuss emergency plans with your families.
- » Consider using a weather app or weather radio, or sign up for emergency notifications through emails, phone calls or texts.

## DURING THE STORM

- » Continue to monitor weather reports and stay away from doors and windows. Seek shelter in safe areas in case a severe thunderstorm approaches.
- » Do not use landline phones, running water or other electronics. Lightning can travel through phone lines and plumbing.
- » Unplug appliances and electronics.
- » Do not drive on flooded roadways.

## AFTER THE STORM

- » Stay at least 35 feet away from downed utility lines and report any fallen lines to authorities. Additionally, avoid items in contact with a downed power line.
- » Monitor weather apps and local media for reports of weather-related hazards.

Sources: The Electrical Safety Foundation International and the Department of Homeland Security.

*Save  
the date*

The Raymondville Annual Meeting for VTCI Co-op Members is scheduled for Tuesday, May 12, 2020. Additional details coming soon.



## CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

It's free! State law requires two working days' notice.

**DIGGING OR DRILLING:** Before you dig or drill on your property, please call Texas One Call to avoid damaging your telephone and other underground lines. Remember, it's the law. Call 48 hours before digging.

**ANTES DE EXCAVAR OR PERFORAR:** Antes de excavar o perforar en su propiedad, llame a Texas One Call para evitar daños a las líneas de teléfono o a otros cables subterráneo. Solo para emergencias después de horas, llame a nuestro Servicio de Reparaciones.

*Spring  
forward!*

Daylight Saving Time begins at 2 a.m. on Sunday, March 8. Don't forget to set your clocks ahead one hour.



## Money matters Turn to online tools

**T**ax season is far from anyone's favorite time of the year, but it's a good opportunity to take stock of your finances. In the past, this may have meant visiting an accountant or sitting down at the kitchen table with shoeboxes full of statements and receipts. Fortunately, technology has made it easier to track your banking and expenses and to even keep your credit secure. All it takes is your internet connection.

### MONEY MANAGEMENT

There are several money management tools on the market. Some, such as Quicken — [quicken.com](http://quicken.com) — are software applications that offer web and mobile options, but full functionality requires their desktop version. Others, including Personal Capital — [personalcapital.com](http://personalcapital.com) — are online services accessed through a web browser.

Regardless of which you choose, these personal finance managers allow you to view and track your spending, savings and investments in a single screen, without the need to visit different sites or remember multiple passwords. The main dashboard for Personal Capital, for example, lists your bank accounts, investments, credit card balances, personal loans, mortgage and other asset and its colorful graphics correspond to your net worth, budget and savings.

Along with a quick-glance view of your finances, Quicken allows you to organize and pay all your bills online, as well as manage a small business. The company's Home and Business option tracks assets and liabilities in a complete balance sheet.

Even if you are only looking for a simple way to manage your budget, these tools are worth a try. Personal Capital is a free service and Quicken offers a starter plan for \$34.99 a year.

### TAXES

If your income is \$69,000 or less, the IRS offers a free way to file your return: [www.irs.gov/filing/free-file-do-your-federal-taxes-for-free](http://www.irs.gov/filing/free-file-do-your-federal-taxes-for-free). While the IRS offers a free option for those earning more, it is far from easy to use.

For those with a higher income who want to file from their computer, the better option is to use a commercial service, such as TurboTax, E-file.com or H&R Block.

### CREDIT LOCK

Credit is an important part of your financial life, so protecting it from improper use is a must. You may have heard of "freezing" your credit, but you can also "lock" it. Both prevent creditors from accessing your credit report — protecting you from new accounts being opened without your knowledge — but there are differences between them.

Freezing your credit with all three major credit reporting bureaus — Equifax, TransUnion and Experian — is free, but Experian charges \$19.99 a month for a credit lock.

Whether you choose to freeze or lock your credit, remember you are entitled by law to a free copy of your credit report every 12 months from each of the credit reporting companies. [📄](#)



# Become a **Wi-Fi** *wizard*

## How to keep connection speeds HIGH and frustration LOW

**A**s smartphones, laptops, gaming consoles, streaming players and other devices get more advanced with new features and capabilities, the need for a strong and steady Wi-Fi connection is getting more important all the time.

A buffering signal brings its own special kind of frustration, and while your gut reaction may be to point the finger at your internet speed, that may not be the culprit. Several issues could affect the strength of your Wi-Fi signal and they are rarely related to the speed of your internet connection. While VTX1 Companies' technical support staff are always happy to help, here are a few common problems you can troubleshoot on your own. These fixes may save you some time and get you back online in a flash.

### PAST THEIR PRIME?

Older computers and tablets can have slower processors, making it

difficult to take advantage of today's faster broadband speeds. Consider upgrading some of your devices for faster connection speeds.

### EXTENDING THE SIGNAL'S REACH

While adding a router to your internet connection extends the power of broadband throughout your home by turning the signal into radio waves, the location of your router does affect the performance of your Wi-Fi.

Router interference can come from several places, including metal objects positioned near the router. Believe it or not, the metal mesh embedded in plaster walls in some older homes can limit the signal. Even household items that aren't connected to the internet can affect your Wi-Fi performance. Take for example a microwave, Bluetooth devices — keyboard, mouse, headset — as well as

fluorescent lights, cordless phones and some external computer monitors, can also have an effect.

### CLOSENESS MATTERS

We've said it before, but it bears repeating — the location of the router really does matter. With that in mind, make sure your router is close enough to the device you want to use. The farther away you get from your router, the weaker the Wi-Fi signal will become. A laptop on the second floor and on the opposite end of your home may not get the same connection speed as one downstairs in the same room as the router. If possible keep it in a central location of your home closest to the area where you use Wi-Fi the most.

### SYSTEM OVERLOAD?

Every device connected to your Wi-Fi network shares your home's total bandwidth. So, when your family is using several connected devices, some users may experience slower performance or buffering when streaming devices. To work through this issue, you may need a Wi-Fi extender or a faster Internet speed. Contact VTX1 at 1-800-446-2031 or visit [www.vtx1.net](http://www.vtx1.net) to find out more about our various speed packages and bundle options. 



# 21<sup>st</sup> - Century Scouting

## CAMP PERRY EXPANSION BOOSTS STEM OPPORTUNITIES

Story by ANDREA AGARDY | Photography by MELISSA GAINES

Camp Perry may be the longest-running Boy Scouts camp in Texas — it welcomed its first Scouts to the banks of the Arroyo Colorado back in 1927 — but it’s anything but old-fashioned. Thanks to the support of community partners, including VTX1 Companies, the Rio Hondo camp is introducing Scouts to the latest technological and scientific developments in hopes of charting a course for their futures.



An expansion will allow Camp Perry to offer more science, technology, engineering and math programs for Scouts such as from left, Christine Zayas, Gabriela Alvarez and Lola Mejia.



### OUT-OF-THIS-WORLD OPPORTUNITIES

Camp Perry has a track record of helping Scouts reach the stars. Among its alumni is Michael Fossum, former commander of the International Space Station. Fossum’s father died when the future astronaut was just 6 years old, leaving his mother to raise four boys alone. Fossum’s mother signed him up for Scouts to provide to him positive male role models.

“Mike started going off to Camp Perry. For a lot of the Scouts down here, this is the only place they have to go to camp and learn about different things,” says Rudy Gonzalez, Scout executive for the Rio Grande Council-Boy Scouts of America. At the camp, Fossum spent a lot of time stargazing and dreaming of a bright future.

Fossum never forgot his time at Camp Perry, and when he had the opportunity to pay a unique return visit, he made the

most of it. “One of the flights that he had, the space station was passing over camp,” Gonzalez says. “NASA came down and connected all these computers and technology. We put all the kids’ names in a hat and picked three kids to ask questions as the space station was going over camp. That blew their minds that they were able to talk to the International Space Station.”

## CONNECTING CAMP PERRY

The camp is currently in the process of a major expansion, which will include a new STEM facility where Scouts will learn about science, technology, engineering and math. VTX1 is helping that mission by providing Camp Perry free Internet to the camp. “With what VTX1 is doing by helping us with the STEM facility, we’re going to be able to offer more kids the opportunity to be able to dream and have the chance of becoming someone important in life,” Gonzalez says.

Camp Perry found an enthusiastic community partner in VTX1, particularly CEO Dave Osborn. An Eagle Scout himself, Osborn knows the benefits of Scouting firsthand, and he’s excited to help a new generation of Scouts experience them.

“When you serve rural communities, a large part of your responsibility includes preparing the youth in those communities to compete in today’s world,” Osborn says. “Providing top-notch Internet service is the best way I know to do that. Keeping our youth connected to the world is the best way I know to establish and maintain parity with urban areas. By providing Internet service, there is no reason for our young people to be left behind.”

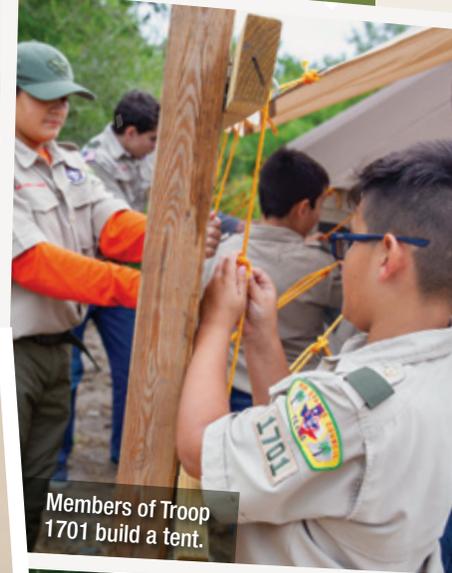
## HONORING TRADITIONS

While Camp Perry is stepping up its STEM offerings, traditional Scouting activities are still very much on the agenda. The camp hosts 3,000 Scouts — boys and girls alike — from a five-county area each year. While there, the kids are busy swimming, kayaking, practicing archery, learning about nature and so much more.

While their Scouting activities are fun, there’s also a lot of learning and character building happening. “It’s the parts of the Scout Law that prepare them for life,” Gonzalez says. “Through the Scouting program, they’re going to learn things. To them it’s going to be a game because they’re out there having fun, but it’s a game with a purpose. We’re here to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices throughout their lifetimes.”



Samuel Castillo and Tristan Otting work on their merit badges.



Members of Troop 1701 build a tent.



Zachary DeLeon



Zabella Vazquez

## Building the future takes a team

More than 1,200 people from all walks of life volunteer their time to make sure Scouts get the most out of their Camp Perry experience, and many others provide financial support. Rudy Gonzalez, Scout executive for the Rio Grande Council-Boy Scouts of America, believes this kind of investment is the key to setting kids up for success.

“It doesn’t matter if you help the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, the YMCA, the Boys & Girls Club — our youth need more help these days,” Gonzalez says. “We need the financial support from donors that give us a dollar, to corporations that might be able to give us a million dollars. We can help our young people now.”

With community spirit in mind, Camp Perry offers its facilities to other nonprofit organizations, like the Ronald McDonald House. “We’re all the same,” Gonzalez says. “We’re all trying to reach the same kids and make a difference.”

Sharing resources also sets an example for the Scouts. “At the end of the day, that’s what we’re trying to teach them — in life, you’ve always got to give back and help,” he says. “Part of the Scout Law is that a Scout is trustworthy, loyal and helpful. We want to make sure that they always remember that and be helpful at all times.”

For more information on Scouting, Camp Perry or how to donate, visit [www.camp-perry.com](http://www.camp-perry.com).



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