

LOCAL

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VETERANS

Cheer on wounded soldiers as they cycle along bayfront. **5B**



MILITARY

Mishap during training exercise leads to emergency landing.

HARP PLAYS ROLE IN MARIACHI



Students get festival sneak peek

ABOVE: Julio Martinez of Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán teaches Moody High School students the history of the arpa (harp) before playing mariachi harp music. The 12-member Mariachi Vargas will perform at 7:30 p.m. Saturday at American Bank Center's Selena Auditorium during the sixth annual Coastal Bend Mariachi Festival.



RIGHT: Martinez shows Moody High School students the technique used to play the mariachi harp.

Vega finds inspiration.

Barraza-Vega, a local artist, teacher and art graduate student at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, has expressed her admiration and respect for women and their role in society in much of her artwork.

More than 50 of Barraza-Vega's paintings, drawings and graphics will be on display at Nuevo Café through the end of March in commemoration of International Women's Month. International Women's Day will be celebrated Saturday.

"I am honoring women, and we are not weak as we have been seen for centuries," Barraza-Vega said. "We are strong and we are a strong part of many societies."

Her art depicts women as nurturers, leaders and dreamers — all roles Barraza-Vega says contribute to the critical role women play in families, businesses and local and world affairs.

Barraza-Vega, who immigrated to the United States from Mexico 40 years ago, said her mother embodied the strength of will that she most admires about women. When Barraza-Vega first began to paint, it was the image of her mother that served as the representation of everything she thought a woman could be.

Barraza-Vega's mother brought her and her sister to the United States in search of opportunities.

It wasn't an easy feat and, for the single mother, one that took equal parts courage, determination, independence and love.

"My mother worked all her life so that me and my sister could grow up in the United States, where life is better," Barraza-Vega said. "She was the one who inspired me to see that women are an important part of society."

With American women serving their country in Iraq, female politicians being elected to lead traditionally male-dominated nations such as Argentina, and a female candidate a contender for the U.S. presidency, Barraza-Vega believes the image of women internationally is evolving.

Such roles counter what often are considered oppressive beliefs about women's roles in other cultures.

"Women are survivors and leaders and caretakers of the family," she said. "We are very strong and also soft."

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