

Camp adjusts to needs of aging Hispanic Baby Boomers

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ALTO FRIO—Over the last 26 years, the annual [Hispanic Senior Adult Camp](#) has adjusted to meet the needs and concerns of aging Baby Boomers, but its mission has remained unchanged—to serve Hispanic Texas Baptist seniors.

Pastor Andrew Villarreal founded Campamento Annual para Adultos Mayores in 1993 when he noticed few Hispanics attended predominantly Anglo senior adult Baptist camps.

Passing the torch

Now a second generation—Villarreal's daughter Patty, adjunct lecturer of social work at Baptist University of the Americas—serves as the camp's president during a time of continuing transition.

She points out the transition began long before she assumed the leadership post. When Gloria Gonzalez was president about a decade ago, she pushed for the camp to adopt a constitution that set one-year terms for officers.

The camp also recognized as a new generation of Hispanic Texas Baptists entered their senior adult years and times changed, new topics needed to be addressed.

"There are issues now that were not issues 26 years ago," Gonzalez said. "Now we talk about suicide, overuse of drugs and over-the-phone scammers."

Making changes



President Patty Villarreal (right) has participated in varied ways since her dad, Andrew, founded the camp. She is pictured with previous presidents (left to right) Gloria Gonzalez, Marcos Castro and Grace Rodriguez. (Photo / Isa Torres)

When Gonzalez was president, the Hispanic Baptist Senior Adult Camp's founder realized its dates did not fit into everyone's schedule. Even so, the camp had grown so much that Alto Frio struggled to provide overnight accommodations.

So, Andrew Villareal launched [Campamento Maranatha](#) in 2003 to provide an alternate date and location to serve additional Hispanic senior adults.

Campamento Annual para Adultos Mayores marked another significant change when Grace Rodriguez was president.

In response to a rising generation of Hispanic senior adults who did not speak Spanish or felt more comfortable in an English-speaking environment, the camp began to offer bilingual services.

Holistic activities all day long

Today, the Hispanic Senior Adult Camp focuses on providing more holistic activities, such as Zumba classes and water aerobics to promote physical activity and healthy lifestyles, Patty Villareal noted.



For generations, Hispanic Baptists have held a connection with Alto Frio Baptist Camp. Hispanic Senior Adult Camp President Patty Villarreal said continuing to meet at Alto Frio holds significant importance for camp attendees. (Photo / Isa Torres)

In addition, the camp also makes an effort to touch on emotional and spiritual health, Gonzalez added.

From 6:45 a.m. to 8:30 or 9 p.m., the Hispanic Senior Adult Camp offers a variety of activities.

“We understood quickly campers did not want to come and stay in their rooms all day,” Rodriguez said.

Even as the camp has changed, it continues to seek to honor its heritage and traditions—and Hispanic Texas Baptists’ connection to Alto Frio,

Villareal said. Many first-generation attendees at Hispanic Senior Adult Camp have fond memories of attending youth camp at Alto Frio, she noted.

“A lot of these campers either came to camp themselves as young people, or they sent their children. So, there would be an emotional break if we went somewhere else,” she said.

Many campers come to Alto Frio to maintain the relationships they have had for years.

“Thankfully, they also get to connect with people they did not know before,” Villareal said.