

San Marcos Daily Record

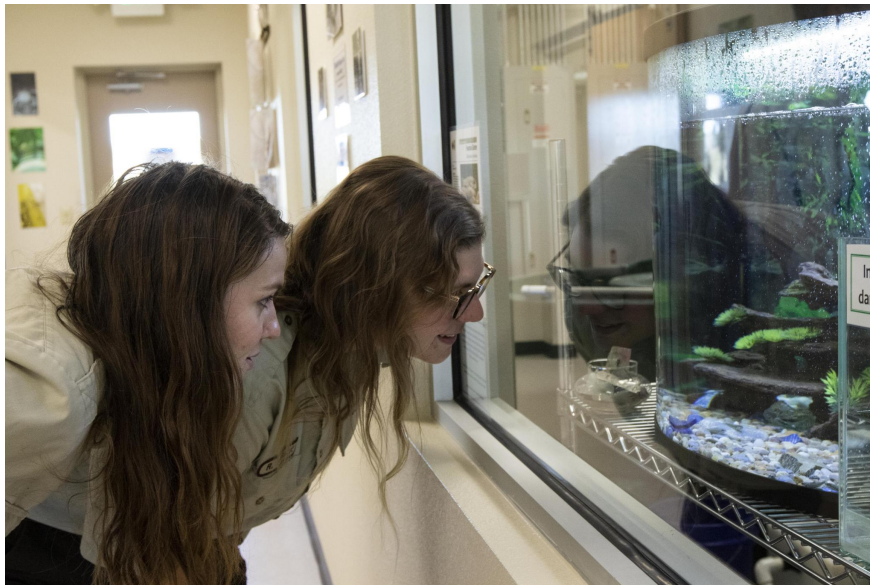
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Inside the new Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan Refugia Building at the San Marcos Aquatic Resource Center (SMARC), biological science technicians Kelsey Anderson and Rachel Wirick watch from the main hallway as fountain darters swim around a small aquarium. Daily Record photos by Denise Cathey

SMARC Opens New Refugia Facility

Fri, 04/26/2019 - 12:00am

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It was only fitting that ceremonies to dedicate the new refugium building at San Marcos Aquatic Research Center (SMARC) were interrupted a couple of times by passing trains on Thursday.

The same train tracks cross the environmentally-sensitive San Marcos River – often with rail cars carrying substances that could if they were to be released in

MARKETPLACE



San Marcos, TX 78666

Weather

71.1 °F

Chance Rain Showers

SSE Wind
13.8mph

70 °F 86 °F

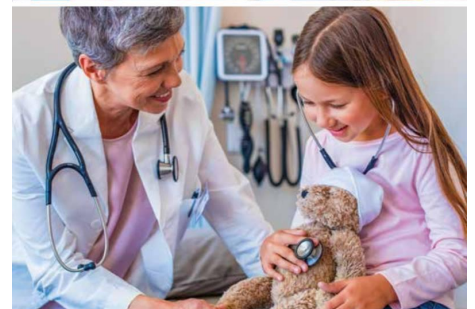
71	85	68	83	65	84	63	80
TUE		WED		THU		FRI	

9:04 AM Mon Apr 29

WillyWeather

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HAYS COUNTY MEDICAL DIRECTORY 2019



the waterway prove catastrophic for the plants and animals that live there.

It's a nightmare scenario but one that has long been not only acknowledged but planned for by establishing populations of federally-endangered species at SMARC – so that in the event of a catastrophic event they could be re-introduced into the stream.

Shiny new tanks hold populations of Texas Wild Rice, the Texas Blind Salamander, the San Marcos salamander, the fountain darter and the riffle beetle. The organisms are not only kept safe but are studied by scientists concerned with breeding and other functions and serve a huge role in educating the public about the environment.

“The contract for the refugia was executed two years ago but it was worth the wait,” Amy Lueders, southwest regional director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, said to an audience of Edwards Aquifer Authority board members, staff from SMARC and a back-up refugia in Uvalde, and other interested parties.



Following the speakers, Edwards Aquifer Authority board member Ron Walton and President Luana Buckner valiantly tried to smash open a ceremonial water droplet piñata as part of the celebration. Standing in the background is a costumed Texas Blind Salamander. A group tour of the new facility was held after the piñata broke.

Lueders called the work of the EAA and USFWS an “amazing partnership” and an “investment in the future and in the value of the Edwards Aquifer and its organisms.”

“Finally, a full refugia facility with a backup in Uvalde,” said Scott Storment, program manager for the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan (EAHCP). “This is an opportunity to celebrate something that’s been long in the making.”

EAA Executive Director Roland Ruiz also hailed the “shared value” that had been built by the two agencies. “It’s an \$18 million investment for the region and part of a commitment to make the aquifer sustainable,” he said.

Ceremonies included smashing a water drop piñata and a visit from a costumed Texas Blind Salamander in addition to a tour of the new facility.

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