

Event to host Elva and Keith Michal on May 20

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

Drs. Elva and Keith Michal (pronounced Michael) recently celebrated their 61st wedding anniversary. They were both in their early 20s when they were married, so you can do the math.

In November 2015 they moved back to Medina, Ohio, near Cleveland, to be closer to family members, after living nearly 20 years in the Rio Grande Valley, in Pharr, but not before leaving a legacy to be cherished by many who came to know them.

When they first moved here, both had just retired from teaching careers and were in their 60s. As a part of their travel plans to discover the next chapter, the next calling, if you will, they came to the Valley and saw not only a lush region, with friendly people, but a place where they both could serve others. The couple moved here from Ohio and got to work right away as volunteers. "Keith and I did not want to retire and stop, we both felt we had lots more miles in us and a lot of good we could do, so we set our sights and began our new journey" says Elva Michal.

Both started as Missionary's at Clinica Betania in Reynosa, in 1996, with the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church. Three years later they established The Pharr Community Outreach Project, (PCOP) a faith based after school program for children and youth which became a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit corporation. Eventually classes were offered for adults, as well, in Sewing, Health & Wellness, and a Parenting



Courtesy photo

Drs. Elva and Keith Michal, founders of the Pharr Community Theater, will visit with friends and present their book, 'A History and Mission' at the Pharr Memorial Library at 4 p.m. Saturday May 20. The event is free to the public.

Program. As the program grew classes were added in Citizenship Preparation and English as a second language (ESL) and Spanish classes, leaving no one behind, and free transportation was offered to bring students of all ages to the center in Pharr.

Eventually the organization grew so much that it included 11 additional outreach sites throughout the mid-valley area. As the demand for ESL and Literacy projects increased and with major support from the city of Pharr, The Pharr Literacy Project was created.

"Here is where the idea for theater began; if we can get our ESL students to perform a play, entirely in English, it would be a fun way for them to immerse in the language and have fun while doing it," stated Elva Michal in one of her previous interviews when

talking about the Pharr Community Theater.

"The Pharr Literacy Project was doing well, but now we wanted to expand our new theater program and that's when we heard about Pedro Garcia and his theater projects and experience, so we met with him and together with my husband and I we started the Pharr Community Theater" (PCT) added Elva.

"The Michals are very much loved and respected here in Pharr and in lots of other places in the RGV," said Pedro Garcia who is the current PCT Artistic Director and co-founder.

The theater just wrapped its ninth year and its 40th play and has three more planned this year, including the children's play, Alicia by Elaine Romero, to be directed by Mr. Juan Guerra. The bilingual play, to be performed entirely by chil-

dren, is a loose adaptation from Alice in Wonderland and will run at the theater in Pharr from July 13 through July 18.

"One of the many things I believe to have in common with Elva and Keith is the spirit of helping others by being positive. Both Grandpa and Grandma, as the Michal's are known by many down here, rarely ever said no when asked to help and they were able to get many persons involved as well. Their positiveness has that effect. They know how to start up good things, especially through education, teaching and through action. They keep you moving forward in helping brighten peoples lives", added Garcia.

On Saturday May 20, from 4 to 6 p.m., the Pharr Memorial Library, 121 E Cherokee, will welcome back the Michal's who will be visiting the region for several days. The Library will host a meet and greet the author event featuring the Michal's, who will be presenting the city of Pharr with an archival book they've written called "A History and Mission" about their 20 years in the RGV.

The couple will also address the audience and answer questions and talk to everyone.

"We just love the Valley and its great people. We have many friends living here and to us it's also a home," said Elva.

The reception is open and free to the public. Elva and Keith will surely be happy to see all of you. Complimentary beverages and pastries will be served.

For more information, call (956) 787-3966 or (956) 655-9308.

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Continuing Women Executives to meet May 18