

Local newspaper bringing passion and energy to Killeen area

By Valerie L. Valdez | Herald correspondent

Valerie L. Valdez : Jun 24, 2017



Rick Perkins reads a copy of his quarterly newspaper, Voices United Publication of Victoria, in his Killeen home.

Rick Perkins, 74, does everything with passion from playing the trumpet in his own jazz bands to publishing a quarterly newspaper, Voices United Publication of Victoria, near the Texas coastline. Now, he has brought that passion and energy to Killeen to explore the possibility of starting a local version of his positive publication. Since 2008, Perkins has published the newspaper that profiles people, veterans and businesses, and especially students, making changes for the better in the community.

“I want to inform and inspire students to strive for excellence in the classroom and beyond,” Perkins said. “With the educational and informational articles, I try to motivate someone to be the best they can be.”

His newspaper contains stories such as health issues, education and community activity, technology and other topics.

Perkins understands the value of helping others from his own experiences when a high school band teacher helped with his musical skills, and his family instilled a high standard of excellence.

“I’ve carried that excellence throughout my life, so I want to inspire people who are underachieving to achieve,” Perkins said.

The idea for the first newspaper came when Perkins noticed many articles about young people centered on crime and drugs stories. But Perkins, originally a jazz musician and a former bank vice-president and marketer, never set out to become a publisher.

“I’ve always been a hope-focused, optimistic guy,” Perkins said, “and based on my marketing background, along with my work with youth and non-profit organizations, I decided to start Voices United.”

Perkins said he learned a lot from the first paper and from his mistakes in publishing it, so he is in the due diligence phase, researching the area and meeting with local leaders about the newspaper’s viability.

“We want to be certain whatever we do, that we can maintain it,” he said. The Voices United of Victoria Publication is on hiatus while he plans the new paper.

Born in 1943 in Brooklyn, Illinois, the oldest town incorporated by African Americans in the nation, Perkins was influenced by jazz since childhood but didn’t start playing the trumpet until he was 14.

Music years

“I’m a late bloomer,” he said, laughing. He moved to Los Angeles in 1982 with his job in the garment industry, but put music on hold for 22 years while he raised his two daughters alone. In 1999, Perkins started playing music again and won rave reviews at major venues. Later, he formed the Rick Perkins Quintet in Los Angeles and the Rick Perkins Band in Houston.

Perkins, a disabled Air Force veteran, and his wife of 30 years, Oscar Hernandez-Perkins, moved to Victoria in 2005 to be closer to her family and later he moved his mother from Illinois to care for her. After the deaths of their family members, the Perkins settled in Austin in 2014, but the high home prices shocked them. A granddaughter living in Central Texas suggested they check out Killeen.

“Victoria chose us but we chose Killeen, and the main difference between here and Victoria and Austin is diversity,” said Perkins. “I was just stunned because there are Hispanic and African-American members on the (Killeen) City Council.”