

A photograph of a young man with dark hair, wearing a dark grey t-shirt, black pants, and white sneakers. He is crouching on the edge of a swimming pool, looking towards the camera. The pool has a blue lane divider and a white depth marker that reads "4 FT". The background shows the interior of a large, modern building with a high ceiling and blue structural elements.

Public pool attracts families
for exercise, leisure

THE WATER'S LOVELY

Marc Robertson
Frio-Nueces Current

"Before the pandemic, we had a lot of people here," Jaime Rios says, surveying the air-conditioned building that houses the public swimming pool at Martinez Park in Cotulla. "We expect to see them coming back very soon."

Rios is one of several lifeguards and staff at the county park pool, a facility that opened in 2016 on the southeastern outskirts of Cotulla. Grants, loans and monies generated by the burgeoning energy industry play over the Eagle Ford Shale prompted La Salle County to build several public facilities over the past decade, including fire stations, a library, a community center, and a doubling of the old city- and county-owned Martinez Park with ballfields and a pavilion.

That construction included the public pool, which immediately attracted visitors of all ages, Rios says, as area residents found new ways to further their health and fit-

ness, and to enjoy activities with friends.

Rios is quick to tout the pool's attraction to adults and senior citizens, many of whom visited during daytime hours to tread water, swim laps, and work in groups for healthy exercise.

"There were times when we would have several groups coming to do exercises together," the lifeguard says. "This was a place where people could come to really enjoy time away from home, doing something healthy for their own good."

The pandemic changed all that. Many public facilities closed when staff could no longer guarantee effective health and safety measures related to the virus, even though facilities such as the public pool continue maintaining a rigid schedule of cleaning and sanitization.

Thankfully, Rios says, the worst of the coronavirus appears to have passed, and families may return to their recreational activities.

"When the coronavirus came, we saw the change in

(See [POOL](#), Next Page)