Is it legal to shoot a rattlesnake in your yard in Texas? What the law says

By Mia Valdez

If you find a rattlesnake in your yard, you may wonder: Can you legally shoot a rattlesnake in Texas? The answer is usually yes, but there are important exceptions involving protected species and local firearm laws.

Here's what you need to know.

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In Texas, it is generally legal to shoot a rattlesnake in your yard. However, there are some exceptions — like the snake's species and firearm laws.

Can you shoot rattlesnakes in your own yard in Texas?

In Texas, most rattlesnakes are considered nongame species, meaning they can generally be killed on private property at any time by lawful means, according to Texas Parks and Wildlife.

However, some rattlesnakes are protected by state and federal law. Timber rattlesnakes, for example, are listed as a threatened species in Texas. Killing one could lead to fines or other penalties.

Texas Parks and Wildlife also notes that local firearm laws may still make it illegal to shoot a gun within city limits or residential neighborhoods, even if the snake is on your property.

Is it illegal to shoot a rattlesnake in Texas?

Texas law also prohibits killing certain animals on public roads or public rights-of-way, which could become an issue if the snake leaves your property. Violating Texas fish and wildlife laws can lead to criminal penalties, fines and civil restitution.

Wildlife officials generally discourage people from killing snakes, even venomous ones like rattlesnakes. According to TPWD, snakes play an important role in controlling rodents and other pests.

"Snakes do not prey on humans and they will not chase you, in fact they usually retreat or escape if given the opportunity," the agency says.

What to do if you find a rattlesnake in your yard

Texas wildlife experts recommend keeping a safe distance from rattlesnakes and contacting a professional snake removal service if the animal poses a threat.

Experts generally advise against trying to shoot or handle a rattlesnake yourself because of the physical and legal risks involved. Most snake bites happen when people attempt to corner, move or kill the animal.

You can also make your property less attractive to snakes by removing tall grass, brush piles, fallen logs and other hiding spots.

TPWD also warns people not to touch dead snakes. Even after death, muscle contractions can still cause a snake to bite and inject venom.

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Sara Bryant, Senior Director of Marketing and Content Initiatives; Sara.Bryant@express-news.net

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At Goodwill, Mental Health is Key to Workforce Success

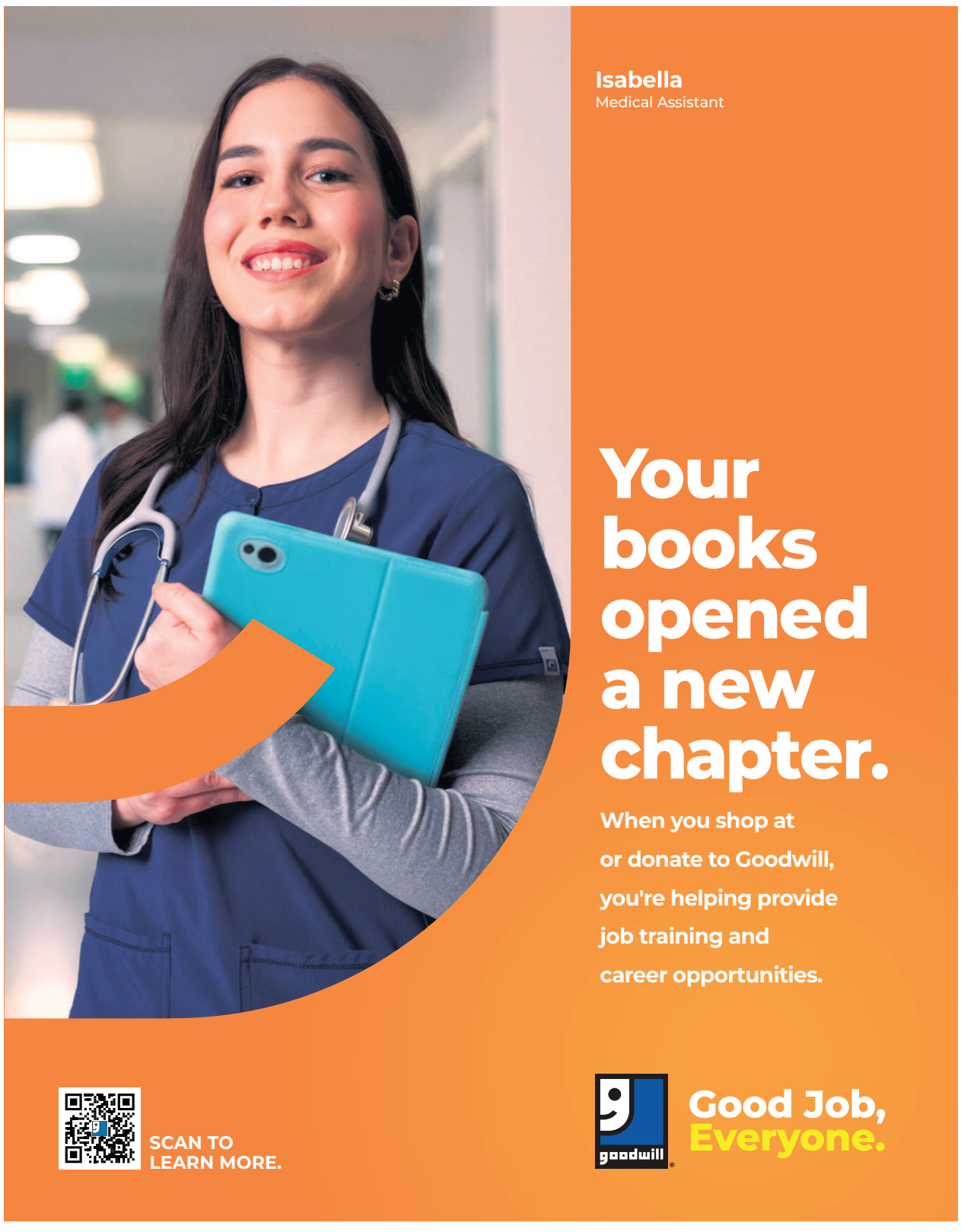
GUEST COLUMNIST
By Carlos J. Contreras, III

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, a nationwide campaign created by Mental Health America in 1949. Aimed at promoting mental health and wellness, this annual observance is not just about education, it is about changing systems and behaviors around mental health, especially in the workplace.

According to Mental Health America, one in five employees experience a mental health condition each year. Mental health is one of the most significant drivers of workforce outcomes, affecting attendance, retention, productivity, and overall performance.

Goodwill's mission is rooted in helping individuals overcome barriers to obtain meaningful employment. We understand our team members may face challenges both in and out of the workplace, which is why we are proud to offer free and confidential mental health support services to our more than 1,700 team members through our Life Skills Coaching and Counseling programs.

Our Life Skills Counseling program is comprised of licensed professional counselors who provide both life and career counseling, as well as referrals to community resources. Through this support, Goodwill team members are able to build confidence, manage stress, and navigate life's challenges.



By integrating mental health awareness into workforce development, we can strengthen our impact and help build a more resilient community and future. If you or someone you know is in need of support, the Center for Health Care Services operates a local 24/7 crisis line, please call 210-223-7233. For career opportunities with Goodwill, please visit goodwillsa.org.