



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 16, 2026

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Golf Legend Lorena Ochoa Named Grand Marshal of the 2026 McAllen Holiday Parade

World Golf Hall of Famer's McAllen visit highlights new golf course partnership, new book, library engagement and a celebrated holiday tradition

McAllen welcomed international golf icon Lorena Ochoa this week for a series of engagements highlighting a growing partnership with the City, a new signature golf course development and the announcement of her role as Grand Marshal of the 2026 McAllen Holiday Parade.

The announcement was made Thursday, October 15, at Bert Ogden Volvo in Edinburg, where Ochoa was named the Grand Marshal of the 2026 McAllen Holiday Parade, presented by H-E-B and powered by Bert Ogden Auto Group. The announcement brought together City leadership, community partners and parade sponsors to celebrate the upcoming holiday tradition, scheduled for Saturday, December 5.

Ochoa's visit also included a media meet-and-greet with the ALARCÓN-MORRISH-OCHOA Golf Design team and a community engagement at McAllen Public Library (MPL) celebrating her new book, *Soñar en Grande*. Her visit to the South Texas International Book Festival further spotlighted the partnership announced at the City's 2026 State of the City address to bring a new signature golf course to McAllen.

"Having Lorena Ochoa spend time in McAllen this week has been exciting," said Mayor Javier Villalobos. "From her connection to our new golf course project to sharing her life story with readers and now serving as our Holiday Parade Grand Marshal, her visit represents the kind of partnerships and experiences that make McAllen a special place to live, visit and invest. We are proud to welcome her and look forward to celebrating with her on December 5."

Ochoa is a member of the World Golf Hall of Fame and one of the most accomplished golfers in sport's history. She became the first Mexican golfer to reach No. 1 in the Rolex Women's World Golf Rankings, earning 27 LPGA victories, including two major championships. Beyond professional golf, Ochoa continues to contribute to the sport through golf course design and champions education and opportunity for children through the Lorena Ochoa Foundation.

During her visit, Ochoa joined Rafael Alarcón and Carter Morrish, her partners in ALARCÓN-MORRISH-OCHOA Golf Design, for a media meet-and-greet at McAllen Public Library. The team is collaborating with the City on a new signature golf course planned west of the existing

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Champion Lakes Golf Course along South Ware Road. The project represents Ochoa's first involvement in designing a golf course in the United States. The planned course is intended to offer engaging experiences for golfers of different ages and skill levels, incorporating creative design concepts, challenges and vegetation native to the region, while considering water conservation, environmental protection, education and youth development.

The visit also included a public engagement at MPL, where Ochoa shared insights into her journey, career and the experiences behind *Soñar en Grande*.

At Thursday's announcement at Bert Ogden Volvo, McAllen City Manager Isaac J. Tawil highlighted the significance of welcoming a champion of Ochoa's caliber to lead one of the region's most anticipated holiday celebrations. "We are excited to welcome a Grand Marshal of this magnitude to lead our festivities," Tawil said. "Lorena Ochoa is a world-class champion whose accomplishments have inspired people across generations and around the globe. Her presence adds an extraordinary level of excitement to Wild Christmas, and we look forward to celebrating with families and visitors near and far."

The City also recognized Bert Ogden Auto Group for its longstanding partnership and continued commitment to the parade. As a day-one partner, Bert Ogden provides more than 50 vehicles to transport parade floats along the route, helping bring the annual spectacle to life for an estimated 265,000 parade guests and millions more watching across Texas, Mexico and beyond.

Natasha Del Barrio, CEO of Bert Ogden Auto Group, announced the return of the company's special parade entry, a new float that will remain under wraps until parade day, along with the return of the company's mascot, Bertie. The 2026 McAllen Holiday Parade promises another memorable celebration. Residents and visitors are encouraged to follow the McAllen Holiday Parade's official social media channels for additional announcements, ticket information and volunteer opportunities.

The McAllen Holiday Parade is presented by H-E-B and powered by Bert Ogden Auto Group, and proudly sponsored by McAllen International Airport, South Padre Island CVB, Reliant and Lone Star National Bank. Additional sponsors include Budweiser-L&F Distributors, McAllen International Bridge System, McAllen Public Utility, Metro McAllen, McAllen Public Works, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Lone Star Ambulance, Matt's Building Materials, PepsiCo, J. Gonzalez Injury Attorneys, South Texas ISD, South Texas College, McDonald's, Driscoll Children's Hospital, Chick-fil-A Rio Grande Valley, American Electric Power Foundation, McAllen Shines, IBC Bank, Lacks Furniture, Visit McAllen, Hermes, Peña Eye Institute, McAllen ISD, Linebarger Attorneys at Law, PNC Bank, O'Reilly Auto Parts, McAllen Economic Development Corporation, Rhodes Enterprises & Esperanza Homes, Pollux Castor Creative, Explore McAllen, Palenque Group, Halff Associates, B2Z Engineering, Carollo Engineers, Whataburger, Sports and SpawGlass.

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About the City of McAllen

Founded in 1904 and incorporated in 1911, the City of McAllen has grown from a small agricultural community into one of the most vibrant and fastest-growing cities along the U.S.-Mexico border. Known as the "City of Palms," McAllen serves as a hub for international trade, retail, tourism, and culture in the Rio Grande Valley. Today, the city employs more than 2,600 dedicated public servants across 41 departments, delivering essential services to a community of more than 150,000 residents. McAllen city leaders remain committed to transparent governance, fiscal responsibility, and enhancing quality of life through innovation, infrastructure, and community engagement. For more information, visit www.mcallen.net and follow us on social media @cityofmcallen