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# The Rural Texan

Summer 2003

Office of Rural Community Affairs

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## Aging in Rural Texas

By Russell Smith, Texas Department on Aging

Although a majority of Texans aged 60 and older live in urban areas—including about half in the San Antonio, Houston/Galveston and Dallas/Fort Worth Metropolitan Standard Areas alone—Texas' persistent bucolic image is far from unfounded. Rural counties still are home for 25 percent of the people in this age group, and this percentage is expected to hold steady for the near future.

In general, rural Texans can be divided into two groups: those who live there by choice and those who lack viable alternatives. The latter group, especially those in the 85-and-older age range, disproportionately face problems such as low incomes, social isolation, deteriorating homes, lack of transportation, and inconsistent access to health care and public services.

Gail Kaiser, director of the West Central Texas Area Agency on Aging, says that two of the 19 counties in her mostly rural service region have no nutrition programs affiliated with her agency, the area's major hub of aging services. Transportation is limited in range and scope; even the seniors who have available service may find that rides are not available for medical appointments or other lifeline purposes. Most counties in the area have been designated as "Medically Underserved."

Even given such difficulties, the tradeoff between country living's benefits and drawbacks is acceptable for an increasing number of retirees in Kaiser's rural region and others such as east Texas, the Rio Grande Valley, far west Texas and the Panhandle. Natural beauty, low crime and tax rates, affordable land prices and the Internet's "de-isolating" capacity, all are appealing to city dwellers seeking weekend getaways for today and retirement homes for tomorrow.

Many of these rural émigrés express little immediate concern about availability of medical care. However, as Kaiser observes, health care access becomes an increasingly compelling issue with advancing age. And with rural hospital closures still a widespread problem, long drives for even routine health care can become problematic for area seniors in all income brackets.

Holly Anderson, aging programs manager for the Deep East Texas Council of Governments, notes that health care access is, if anything, a larger-than-acknowledged problem for some rural communities.

Anderson's agency is seeking to address these needs by—among other strategies—supporting a modest pharmaceutical-assistance program, using Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) volunteers to provide rides to medical appointments, promoting use of telemedicine programs in small area hospitals and joining forces with University of Texas-Galveston Medical Branch and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (among other members) in the East Texas Rural Access Program.

Rural elders, she believes, are not exotic special cases to be considered out of context with American society as a whole. "When it comes to our customers' most basic needs we're very much like the rest of the world," Anderson says. "We've just got a lot more trees for them to hide in."

(See related article on page 14.)

## Regional Task Force Formed to Woo Toyota Suppliers

By Adrian Perez, Middle Rio Grande Development Council

On April 30, 2003, the Middle Rio Grande Development Council(MRGDC) Board of Directors took action to establish a task force to be comprised of all economic development groups within the nine-county area of the Middle Rio Grande region. The task force's primary focus is the new San Antonio Toyota Project, its suppliers market, and potential impact on the area. The task force will establish key selling points and a regional position as to why it is important that the Toyota project and its suppliers should look southwest of Toyota's primary location for resources.

Leodoro Martinez, Jr., Executive Director of the MRGDC has been meeting with several key individuals to get the task force off the ground, including Congressman Henry Bonilla who has worked to acquire the necessary federal funding for the rail line to the Toyota plant.

"We have laid the groundwork through Congressman Ciro Rodriguez by bringing together the City of San Antonio's Economic Development department and the local Economic Development Industry and Small Business Development to meet with the task force," notes Martinez.

Several Middle Rio Grande communities have already engaged their local efforts to attract suppliers. Margaret

Lopez-Baker, Executive Director of the Maverick County Development Corporation (MCDC) indicated Maverick County is seeking to capitalize on its comparative advantages by providing Toyota with high quality data and demographics that effectively market local prospective advantages. Mary Mitchell, Economic Development Director for the City of Uvalde, described their effort as broad based with public and private relationships being fruitful in putting together incentives, which she says are "more creative than just tax abatements."

"The individual community's ability to market and promote themselves effectively is key," said Martinez. "We must continue to develop this capacity. It is important that all our communities prepare to have the necessary infrastructure, joint private-public relations, joint government relations, and the proper incentives in place to be considered for the potential job, business, and economic development that could result from this project."

Martinez also stated that an auxiliary goal of the MRGDC Task Force would be to provide guidance to those communities that have not mobilized an effective means to market themselves to interested parties.

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Linda V. Trinh, Editor

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# From the Desk of...

## The Executive Committee Chair

If state finances are not improving, what are you doing within your community to ensure its success and development for the future? More communities have come to the realization that change is unavoidable, and they need to start establishing economic development programs to help them manage this change. Not only do communities need to incorporate programs to create growth, the programs must be able to address a wide range of conditions and possibilities to have a lasting influence within the community. At a time when the industrial revolution has given way to the information age, a good economic development program will help a community remain "tuned in" to the world. It can help business and industry to be more productive and contribute to the community's overall viability.

For communities to grow and prosper in this ever-changing, technologically advanced society, we need to redefine the focus of our economic development programs. It is no longer beneficial to define economic development in terms of jobs alone. In today's job market, where options such as flextime, job sharing, and transitional placement are becoming part of the work world, it's obvious that a new focus is needed.

Economic development is an integral part of community development. A practical economic development program begins with an examination of local resources, both human and material.

There is no cookie cutter approach; No two communities start development programs from the same place simply because every community's resources are different. Each community must understand their own history and culture and use these resources and natural assets to develop a plan of growth. Achieving this requires a plan that is broad-based and long-term.

Economic development is not a precise science in the traditional sense — its focus must incorporate the whole community.

As always we remain open to your suggestions, and we welcome your ideas and success stories.

William M. Jeter III  
Chair, ORCA Executive Committee

## The Executive Director

The hot topic on the minds of rural Texans today is the future of our rural communities. It is a particularly sensitive subject for those folks living in communities where changes are happening. In some communities, the changes are positive; in others, the changes are creating anxiety and worry.

The communities that have found the key to change and survival are those that recognize that everyone in the community is necessary for their community's future. Beyond the local economic development director and the mayor, rural communities are guided by the local chamber of commerce; businesses; bankers; school administrators, teachers and students; clergy; law enforcement and fire protection officers; healthcare providers; and many others. In a successful, lively community, all the local players are at the table and focused on the future of the community.

So how does a community get focused on this effort? In a recent article in the June 2003 issue of the *Center for Rural Affairs* newsletter, Father Frank Baumert of Albion, Nebraska, put it best when he said, "...people drive change, not money." Change really is not dependent upon getting that grant or finding more money for the project; people must get involved first.

In addition, the article offers that, "organizing is done around people first and issues second." This is contrary to the typical approach of identifying an issue or reacting to a crisis to get people involved. Real success is, instead, dependent on doing it in reverse. Getting local folks involved in the community is where it really starts.

Communities that bring together all the segments of the community take the first and critical step to organizing around people. It is important that a community develop something in common, something that folks can agree to work on. Like taking a trip or vacation, a community must be headed someplace. Doing it around people has a payoff.

Communities are going to change, one way or the other. Its citizens are the key, followed by issues to work on. Where is your community headed? There are resources to help, like the Office of Rural Community Affairs. The future is more successfully faced working together.

Robt. J. "Sam" Tessen  
Executive Director

## In the Eyes of a Rural College Student: *The American Dream*

By Shannon Redwine, Lazbuddie, Texas, Texas A&M University, Class of 2006

The American dream. Imagine this, a nice two story house, huge backyard, wonderful neighbors, white picket fence, 4.5 kids playing in the yard with a cute little dog. Your typical Andy Griffith home in Mayberry, America. But for children attending the small school that this wonderful little town boasts, is this really the American Dream?

Students in this school are able to have exceptional one-on-one learning experiences with their teachers. They are able to be on multiple sports teams, many different leadership roles and organizations, and be an all around, balanced student. Administrators are able to get to know these students better, and care for them accordingly. Sounds like every student and parent's dream. Unfortunately, these students are passed over for scholarships and acceptance into college again and again.

A young man that I graduated with finished third in my high school class. He maintained a 3.6 grade point average. He scored a 29 on his ACT. He got accepted into a prestigious Division I University. This young man's family income was less than \$40,000 a year. He excelled in many competitions, sports, and organizations. He held many leadership positions. By looking at this boy's resume, one would believe him to be a perfect applicant for a generous scholarship. However, when scholarship donors review his application they see one more item of information. They notice he graduated in a class of only fifteen students. They think that since he is from such a small school, he didn't have the amount of competition that students from larger schools had. He was passed over on yet another scholarship and unable to attend college because of financial problems.

This is all too true for students from rural and small schools. It was true for me. Though I was not the student in the above story, my situation was very similar. I graduated second in my class but because of the size of my class, I was not in the top ten percent. But the top ten percent in my class was only one person. I am able to attend Texas A&M University but my family is very strained for money because I only received a minimal amount of financial aid.

In most cases students that attended small schools get a better education than those from 4-A and 5-A schools. The problem is that in a class of 20 kids, the top ten percent is only two students. The top 25 is only five students. For most non-minority related scholarships one of the requirements is you must be in the top 10 or 25 percent of your class before you will even get considered.

Small school graduates have to face overwhelming odds when trying to get scholarships or even acceptance into college. By graduating from a large school, you would have an unfair advantage over rural students. But in many cases rural students are better educated, prepared, and diversified than large city students. It is amazing that rural students are able to get such excellent educations when many have to cope with very poor technology and facilities. It is a crime that we small town kids must try to overcome these odds.

I don't know what the solution is—possibly better scoring systems for small and large schools. Maybe different formulas for calculating a student's ability. I would encourage adults to find out how they can help by talking to their school administrators. I would also tell students to not give up hope no matter how hopeless and frustrating things get.

## "Where in Rural Texas are You?"

Where would you go to find "Demons" and "Demonettes" hootin' and hollerin' for their high school football team?

"Dogie Days" is an annual celebration special to only our rural Texas town.

We are known as the "Natural Gas Capital of the World" and proud of it!

I'm a Ding Dong Dolly and if you like, you can be a Ding Dong Daddy or Dolly if you move here.

"Welcome to \_\_\_\_\_, Texas! Home to 13,000 friendly folks and a few old sore heads!"

(See answer on page 18.)

Where in Rural Texas are you? Let us find you, send ORCA three to five descriptive hints about your town's location and what makes it unique.

## The Status of Rural Texas:

### A Report Worth Your Time

By Jill McFarren, ORCA

Every year, ORCA staff produce a document designed to introduce rural issues to a wide audience facilitating increased awareness and discussion. The document, intended to serve as a resource as well as a catalyst to generate dialogue and even debate, is written with consideration given to a broad range of rural opinions, concerns, and possible solutions to local challenges. The end result is a report that offers a glimpse at some of the complex and diverse issues affecting rural Texas.

The 2002 issue of "The Status of Rural Texas" included a review of then current statewide demographics, and the status of agribusiness, community and economic development, education, healthcare, housing, natural resources and wildlife management, public services telecommunications, and transportation across the state as they relate to rural areas. The report also included recommendations to address rural issues.

The 2003 issue of "The Status of Rural Texas" report is currently under development. All rural Texans are invited to share ideas, comments, and concerns for consideration of publication. Simply send your written missives to ORCA no later than October 1, 2003.

## RCHIP Providing Incentives to Healthcare Professionals

By Linda V. Trinh, ORCA

Non-physician healthcare professions can now look to the Rural Communities Health Care Investment Program (RCHIP) for stipends and loan repayment assistance. RCHIP is designed to attract and retain healthcare professionals in rural communities by providing incentives.

RCHIP is state-funded and assists health professionals pursuing health care specialties and willing to practice in qualifying medically underserved communities in Texas. Awards are made on an annual basis and the number of awards is contingent upon the availability of funds. The maximum annual award amount is \$6,000 and no more than \$24,000 for four 12-month periods of service per individual.

The application process for the RCHIP begins July 1 of every year and funds are awarded June 30 of the following year.

For more information and to obtain an application, contact ORCA or visit the ORCA website.

### ORCA's Mission:

"To assist rural Texans who seek to enhance their quality of life by facilitating, with integrity, the use of the resources of our state so that sustained economic growth will enrich the rural Texas experience for the benefit of all."



# Guest Column

## Rural Communities are the Fences Around the Fort

By Mayor Gloria V. Flores, Big Wells, Texas

I, for one, can certainly identify with life as a rural Texan. As we commonly say here, "I was born and raised in Texas." Big Wells, Texas is located 100 miles southwest from San Antonio and 70 miles northwest from Laredo.

The differences in our rural community differ greatly from urban communities. The majority of our rural community is made up of retired migrant workers who lack any kind of education. Our children lose interest in furthering their education because of the strenuous commute they endure everyday to and from the high school, which is located 20 miles outside of town. With the lack of interest and grueling obstacles, the children miss the opportunity to participate in many extracurricular activities.

We, as parents, feel useless and inadequate because we cannot provide our children with the things that we also lacked in our childhood. The problem is not with government; the problem lies with the scarcity of jobs available in rural communities.

After years of hard, exhausting labor, our retired migrant workers lose their homes, which took a lifetime to build, due to high property taxes or devastating natural disasters, which are both very common in Texas. Our community has only two paved streets, both of which are unprofessionally paved. After such disasters, these and all of our other streets are full of holes that are bigger than ever. We do not have any community centers where our town would have the opportunity to connect with their neighbors and build social well-being. There are no game rooms, swimming pools, or sport courts for our youth who are growing increasingly restless with each passing day.

Therefore, I was extremely grateful to our elected state officials who created the Office of Rural Community Affairs. Since ORCA's inception, our community has benefited greatly from grant awards that are going to address some of our most serious problems, such as water, sewer, and housing needs. Living in and representing a rural community, I am appreciative of the fact that ORCA has truly taken time out to consider the unique needs and circumstances that rural communities all across Texas face on a daily basis.

In the past it has been difficult for rural towns to compete with our urban counterparts, but now with assistance from ORCA, we have a better chance at truly creating and forming viable rural communities. After all, we the rural communities of Texas are the fences around the fort.

## Recruitment Event Offers Low-Cost Opportunity for Rural Communities

By Jill McFarren, ORCA

Recruiting and retaining professionals in rural areas is an expensive, time-consuming process faced by most community leaders. To assist rural Texans with meeting this challenge, ORCA offers HealthFind 2003, an event designed to maximize every small community's healthcare recruitment and retention efforts while stretching their recruitment dollars.

An annual expo, HealthFind encourages health professionals to practice in rural areas. This exciting event provides a comfortable, casual "job fair" atmosphere for rural community leaders to discuss practice opportunities and recruit both health professionals already practicing and those still in training who are considering a rural practice and lifestyle.

The event has had great results. Robert Pascasio, from Bayside Community Hospital in Chambers County, expressed his satisfaction with HealthFind, noting, "With the difficulty we have had recruiting this last year, I can not begin to share what a relief it was to finally meet some folks who were interested in us. Thank you for your efforts in running a very efficient, effective program."

Communities aren't the only ones who benefit from the event. "HealthFind is a great opportunity for my wife and I to investigate practice opportunities all over rural Texas without the expensive burden of traveling to all of these areas," a third year resident from the University of Texas Medical Branch at Conroe said.

This year, ORCA has expanded the breakout session topics to enrich the healthcare professional recruitment experience. Some of the session topics and guest speakers will include physician contracts by Davis & Wilkerson, PC, practice start-up for residents by Texas Medical Association's Physician Services, and licensure information by the State Board of Medical Examiners. With last year's overwhelming success, HealthFind 2003 is continuing its panel discussions of rural physicians and spouses and adding a panel discussion of midlevel providers.

HealthFind 2003 is slated for September 6-7, 2003 in Austin.

For more information or to register, contact ORCA or visit the agency's website.

### Tips for Communicating Effectively with Your Legislators

- Get to know your legislator's staff on a first name basis.
- Create a rapport and relationship with your legislators and their staff. Spending time together will help them remember you throughout the session and during the interim.
- Be concise when you present your information; do not dwell on the issues affecting your perspective, instead focus on your information.
- Remember, most successful legislation is planned prior to the session taking place.

Source: David Griffith, Office of Representative Harvey Hilderbran, District 53



# Spotlight on...

## TRWA Providing Clean, Safe Drinking Water

By Laurie Murphy Logan, Texas Rural Water Association

The Texas Rural Water Association (TRWA) is a statewide nonprofit trade association representing over 750 water and wastewater systems in Texas.

TRWA member utilities provide service to 2.5 million customers.

TRWA was established in 1969 to help rural utilities supply safe, affordable water to the citizens of rural Texas. TRWA members include Nonprofit Water Supply and Sewer Service Corporations, Special Utility Districts, Municipal Utility Districts, Water Control and Improvement Districts, Small Municipal Utilities, Privately-Owned Water Utilities, as well as water and wastewater industry suppliers.

TRWA offers a variety of services to member utilities including on-site technical assistance, educational programs, publications, and representation in the legislative arena and before regulatory agencies.

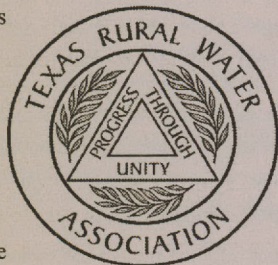
TRWA's comprehensive technical training program provides Texas Commission on Environmental Quality-approved training throughout Texas. Educational workshops and conferences held throughout the year provide attendees with the training they need to effectively and efficiently manage and operate their water systems. TRWA's Operator Certification program offers traditional classroom training as well as online training to industry personnel in pursuit of obtaining or renewing water and wastewater operator certification in Texas.

TRWA employs experienced field representatives who provide management training and onsite technical assistance to member utilities year round. When a member utility seeks assistance, one of these experts is dispatched, free of charge, to help resolve the problem. Field representatives provide expert advice on such topics as leak detection, water audits, rate analysis, budgeting, policies and procedures, TCEQ rules and regulations and much more.

A major focus of the Association is monitoring legal and legislative matters affecting Texas water systems. TRWA employs a full-time attorney and maintains a legal defense fund to assist member utilities with any necessary legal advice and/or legal representation. TRWA also employs a full-time lobbyist to promote favorable legislation in Austin and Washington DC.

The Association works closely with state and federal agencies to ensure that the rules and regulations imposed by these agencies are reasonable and necessary. TRWA members stay informed of the latest industry developments through the Association's educational website and through the Association's award-winning bimonthly magazine, *Quality on Tap!*

TRWA is committed to preserving the rural quality of life by providing its member utilities with the tools they need to provide clean, safe drinking water. For more information on the Texas Rural Water Association, call 512-472-8591 or log on to [www.trwa.org](http://www.trwa.org).



## The City of Brackettville

By Linda V. Trinh, ORCA

Brackettville, the county seat of Kinney County, is 22 miles northeast of the Rio Grande River and 125 miles west of San Antonio. It is named after Oscar B. Brackett, who established the first general dry goods store near the site of Fort Clark in 1852. Brackett, as it was called originally, was established on the San Antonio-El Paso Road.

The community experienced a period of steady growth after the Civil War, attracting cattle rustlers, buffalo hunters, gamblers, and businessmen. The community became known as Brackett or Brackett City when it received a post office in 1873. However, since another Texas community was named Brackett, the postal service changed the community's name to Brackettville. It was designated the county seat of Kinney County when the county was established in 1876.

Brackettville enjoyed a period of exceptional prosperity during the period between 1878 and 1882, as nearby Fort Clark swelled with thousands of soldiers. During this time, the town grew rapidly and many businesses were established. Devastating floods in 1880 and 1899

caused considerable damage and persuaded many of Brackettville's residents to move to higher elevations about the community.

In 1884, Brackettville had an estimated population of 1,400, two churches, three schools, a private bank, a weekly newspaper known as the *Brackett News*, a Masonic and Odd Fellows lodge, and a daily stage to Spofford. By this time, the community was an established shipping point for wool and hides. Many residents of the community owned or worked on ranches in the area and primary sources of income included livestock, wool and mohair, pecans, and hay. Brackettville was incorporated on July 28, 1930, which ensured funding for a new water-distribution plant.

In 1936, the town had an estimated population of 1,822, of which an estimated 75 percent were of Mexican or Seminole-Negro descent. The commercial viability of the community at this time was highly dependent on business with nearby Fort Clark, sheep and goat ranching, truck farming, and the tourist industry.

Today, with a population of 1,876, Brackettville's main attractions include its historical buildings, scenic drives, Seminole Indian Scout Cemetery, Fort Clark Springs, and Alamo Village. Alamo Village is a western family recreation center built around the movie set for John Wayne's "The Alamo," filmed in 1959. The set was one of the largest and most complete ever constructed in the US. The Alamo replica, built by adobe craftsmen from Mexico, overlooks a complete frontier village of the 1800s. Operated by ShahanAngus Ranch, the set includes a cantina-restaurant, trading post, Indian store, authentic stage depot, old-time jail, bank, saddle shop, and other typical Old West structures. During summer months, visitors see regular country and western shows that are often interrupted by shoot-outs between frontier lawmen and desperadoes. The set is still used for movies, television, and commercials today.

In addition to these attractions, great hunting is available in the area for white-tailed deer, wild turkey, javelina, and upland game birds. Kickapoo Cavern State Park, located 22 miles north of Brackettville, boasts 15 known bat caves and offers bat flight observation tours.

For more information on Brackettville, contact the Brackettville Chamber of Commerce at 830-563-2466 or visit [www.brackettville.com/chamber](http://www.brackettville.com/chamber).



The Brackettville County Courthouse in Brackettville.

### Surfing the Rural Net: Websites Worth Checking out!

The Center for Rural Affairs, a private, non-profit organization, is working to strengthen small businesses, family farms and ranches, and rural communities.

[www.cfra.org](http://www.cfra.org)

ABC Rural Online integrates ABC's TV, radio and online coverage of rural and primary industry issues as well as develop original material for the internet.

[www.abc.net.au/rural/about.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/rural/about.htm)

The Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI) conducts policy-relevant research and facilitates public dialogue to assist policymakers in understanding the rural impacts of public policies and programs.

[www.rupri.org](http://www.rupri.org)

## Environmental Assistance Only a Phone Call Away

By Celeste Hoehne,  
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

There's free help with environmental compliance right in your backyard! The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) has designated compliance assistance specialists for each of TCEQ's 16 regional offices. The region specialists compliment a core group of eight specialists in the Austin office, all from the Small Business and Local Government Assistance (SBLGA) section.

All of these specialists have received extensive training in pollution prevention, reporting requirements, recycling, and environmental outreach for water, waste, and air issues. Their job is to provide hands-on, one-to-one assistance at the point of need. Whether you contact the central office on the toll free, confidential hot line at 1-800-447-2827, or call your compliance specialist directly, all information you share with your specialist is confidential from the TCEQ's Enforcement Division. To find your region's SBLGA compliance specialist, call 512-239-1000 or visit the TCEQ website at <http://www.tnrcc.state.tx.us/exec/sbea/sblga.html>.

## Iowa Park Man Wins Rural Heroism Award

Agriculture Commissioner Susan Combs announced that Chris Mooney, of Iowa Park, Texas, is the recipient of the Texas Department of Agriculture 2002 Rural Heroism Award. The announcement was made at the Texas Safety Association's annual conference held in Houston.

Mooney was gathering cattle near Archer City on November 7, 2002 when a fellow cowboy, Todd Page, lost consciousness and fell from his horse. The horse bolted, and Page's rope wrapped around his neck and arm. Page was dragged across the ground unconscious until Mooney was able to ride ahead and stop the horse. Mooney summoned help and freed Page from the ropes. Two other cowboys, Darrell Wines and Doug Strange, aided Mooney in transporting Page to the road where an ambulance could take him to a hospital.

"Chris was able to keep his cool in a terrifying situation," explained Combs. "He knew the best way to approach the runaway horse without panicking it further, which almost certainly saved Todd Page's life."

The Rural Heroism Award is given every four years by TDA. Candidates must have performed a heroic, lifesaving act within Texas during the prior year. The heroic deed should be related to farming or ranching and occur in a rural area.

For more information on the Rural Heroism Award, call the Texas Department of Agriculture at 512-463-7476 or visit [www.agr.state.tx.us](http://www.agr.state.tx.us).

**Check the ORCA website  
for a calendar of  
upcoming rural events  
across the state!**

## Brush Control Program may Boost West Texas Water Supply

### River Don't Rise

When you're suffering from a drought, the last thing you need is someone coming along and sucking up 200 or so gallons of water a day. Unfortunately, that's exactly what salt cedar trees are doing along the Pecos River in West Texas, according to Charles Hart, associate professor and extension agent with the Texas Cooperative Extension.

The trees have pushed out almost every other type of tree or shrub growing in the region. According to the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA), salt cedar trees knock out other plants by increasing surface salinity, for which they have a high tolerance. Salt cedars also lower the amount of water that soil can hold and increase the frequency of fires.

Farmers and ranchers began fighting back in 1999 by creating the Pecos River Ecosystem Project. The project, funded by the Red Bluff Power and Control District and seven local irrigation districts in 1999 and 2000, paid for large-scale herbicide treatment of salt cedar trees along the Pecos River. The state now foots the bill; the state funded treatments in 2001 and 2002, and in August 2002, the Texas Water Development Board approved a \$1 million grant from TDA for the project.

### Not a drop for crops

While other brush removal programs in the state received larger grants, it's tough to argue anyone needed help more than the drought-stricken farmers along the Pecos.

"I believe this is the thirteenth year of the drought," says area alfalfa farmer Tom Nance, who is also president of the Ward County Irrigation District #1 board of directors. "I have lived here all my life—I'm 52 years old—and I have never seen the water in the river not running at all until this year. It was just sitting in pools."

Even with the Pecos River Ecosystem Project, things probably won't start looking up for a couple more years, according to Hart. Much of the northern portion of the river has been treated, but there hasn't been enough rain yet to see the difference, he says.

"From the state line, we've treated about 120 river miles; that's a little more than 6,500 acres of salt cedar treated," Hart says. "We've got another 200 miles of river to go. We've got another 8,000 to 10,000 acres of salt cedar to treat before we get to the Rio Grande."

The trees are treated with Arsenal, a herbicide made by American Cyanamid Company that is relatively easy on the

environment and can be applied by air.

He says the results of the spraying won't be known until there's more rain in the region, especially in New Mexico, above Red Bluff Lake. The lake feeds directly into the Pecos.

### Slurping cedar

Hart says the extension service has done a lot of research on salt cedar water use.

"We've dug shallow groundwater wells near the river, and with those we can actually measure the water depth on an hourly basis," he says. "We can look at the daily fluctuations in the water table. What salt cedar does is pull the water table down during the day, then at night the water table recharges itself. And we can calculate how much that changes. So far, we've determined that salt cedar uses 7.7 acre-feet of water for every acre. Annually, that's 2.5 million gallons of water for every acre."

Hart says the project has treated more than 36,700 acre-feet since 1999, which has saved almost 12 billion gallons of water. Another 48,000 acre feet of water will be saved in 2003, based on the acreage treated in 2002.

The project has cost about \$1.2 million so far, including research, monitoring and other administrative costs, Hart says. Nance and Hart both say the aerial applications have been extremely successful.

"We've gotten a kill rate of 95 percent or better," Nance says. "We did a tremendous job, but now we've got to go in and clean up." Fallen branches and other debris now cover many parts of the river. Hart says the entire program is administered through the Upper Pecos Soil Conservation District.

Hart says the conservation district has signed contracts with 95 percent of the landowners along the river. They are big proponents of the program, even if the benefits may be a long time coming. Nance says that in the meantime, they're looking at other ways to increase the flow of the river.

"We're hoping for a change in the weather," he says. "But we're also working to seed the clouds and hoping to fly this spring. Still, that won't get us anything from Red Bluff this year."

Adapted from "River Don't Rise" from the April 2003 issue of *Fiscal Notes* by Greg Mt. Joy.

For a copy of this complete article, visit <http://www.window.state.tx.us/comptrol/fnotes/fn0304/river.html>.

## Avery Named Director of VG Young Institute

Richard O. Avery has been named director of the VG Young Institute of County Government. Avery, who succeeds the recently retired John Gilmartin, has been a Cooperative Extension specialist with the Institute since 1994. The Cooperative Extension is an agency of the Texas A&M University System.

Avery has played an integral role in developing the educational agenda for many of the regional and state County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas (CJCAT) continuing education conferences.

The VG Young Institute, part of the Cooperative Extension, was established in 1969 to provide educational programs and services that help elected county officials perform their public duties.

In his new position, Avery will continue to work with professional associations of county judges and commissioners, treasurers, tax assessor-collectors, and district and county clerks.

Avery grew up in Needville and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science from Austin College. He earned a Master of Arts degree in political science from Texas A&M University, where he is currently working for a doctorate from the Department of Educational Administration.

Before joining Extension, Avery served on the legislative staffs of US Senator Lloyd Bentsen and US Representative Greg Laughlin in Washington, DC.

## The Inside Scoop: ORCA's TCDP Program Development, Action Plan

By Jill McFarren, ORCA

ORCA's Texas Community Development Program (TCDP) administers a portion of the funds the state receives as Community Development Block Grant monies from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. TCDP's allocation of HUD dollars are administered through the "Nonentitlement" or "States and Small Cities Program," which provides funds on a competitive and as-needed basis to small, non-metropolitan cities with populations less than 50,000, and to counties that are not eligible for entitlement status (direct allocations from HUD.)

Of the 1,013 Texas communities eligible for TCDP funds, 734 have a population of less than 3,000 and 417 have a population of less than 1,000. The demographics and rural characteristics of Texas have shaped a program that focuses on providing basic human needs and sanitary infrastructure to small rural communities throughout the state. Eligible activities include sanitary sewer systems, clean drinking water, disaster relief and urgent need projects, housing, drainage and flood control, passable streets, economic development, community centers, and other related activities.

All of ORCA's TCDP programs are administered under the criteria provided in the program's annual Action Plan. The Plan includes information about the CDBG program, including:

- General program information,
- Allocation of CDBG funds,
- Application information,
- Application selection criteria, and
- Other program guidelines.

Every year, the public is invited to comment on the Plan. The Plan is designed by TCDP staff based on the previous year's Plan and the decisions of the agency's Executive Committee. All program eligible entities (typically county and local governmental agencies) are notified by memo sent through the US mail that the Plan is available. This notice includes information on public hearings that ORCA hosts at various locations throughout the state to receive comment on the Plan. Notice of the public hearings are also posted in the *Texas Register* (see related story on page 13.)

After the public hearings, the comments are considered by TCDP staff, the agency's executive director and the agency's executive committee, which makes any decisions for integration of into the revised Action Plan.

Once the final version of the Action Plan is approved by ORCA's executive committee, it is submitted to HUD for approval. The availability of program applications is then announced to community leaders by letter mailed through the US post office, and the application process begins.

For more information, contact ORCA or visit ORCA's website.

**"Agency Successes - A  
Biennial Report on the  
Activities, Programs, and  
Services of ORCA"  
Now available on the  
ORCA website.**

## Is the Drought over? The Signals are Mixed

By Martha Gonzalez, Texas Department of Public Safety,  
Division of Emergency Management

Many Texas rivers have spilled over their banks again and again since last summer, overshadowing the severity of drought in some parts of the state. In the past two years, many farmers and ranchers throughout Texas have suffered serious financial losses due to the impact of dry weather. Of Texas' 254 counties, 152 have received a US Department of Agriculture drought declaration in the past year.

Larry Eblen of the National Weather Service said, "It was unusually wet in Central Texas last fall, but there are parts of Texas that didn't get that much rain. There are not that many states where you can have a drought in one part and flooding somewhere else."

In many parts of Texas, there has been simultaneous drought and flooding. In fact, 44 Texas counties received both flood and drought declarations last year.

During the first three months of 2003, portions of Texas got off to a very dry start, receiving rainfalls less than half of normal. The wet weather of last fall mitigates the situation, but as temperatures begin to rise, crop stress will increase in the absence of soaking rains, according to the Drought Preparedness Council (DPC).

The necessity for water use restrictions has eased somewhat. A year ago, there were 50 public water systems under outside water use restrictions. So far this year, there are 45, 37 of which are mandatory.

Major reservoirs across the state are slightly below median

for spring, but up overall from last year. Capacity statewide is currently at 84.1 percent. Although there are currently 31 Texas reservoirs at 100 percent capacity, that number is steadily decreasing.

Despite beneficial rains in the fall, reservoirs in the High Plains and Trans-Pecos are only at one-third capacity. Six Texas reservoirs hold less than 10 percent of storage capacity.

The Elephant Butte Reservoir in New Mexico, which provides water for the Rio Grande River, is at its lowest level in 30 years.

Consequently, water releases have been restricted to specific dates for this spring and summer, greatly limiting surface water availability for the El Paso Valley.

The diversity of Texas weather is having a mixed impact on the farming community. While farmers in the western parts of the state have had minimal relief from the fall and spring rains, farmers in other areas of Texas have had to delay harvesting and planting because of wet fields.

Growers statewide have had to reassess their choice of crops as well as planting and harvesting times.

Wheat producers are hopeful that this year's harvest will be better than last year when they lost \$110 million in production. At present, wheat crop conditions are at 66 percent of normal compared to 43 percent last year.

Overall Texas has fared well during the last eight months. However, if the pattern of decreasing rainfall seen during the previous three months continues, the precipitation of the last eight months will be just a reprieve in the midst of an ongoing drought, and not the long hoped-for end.

## Rural Volunteers Provide Labor for Water Development Grant Projects

By Jill McFarren, ORCA

The Office of Rural Community Affairs (ORCA) has awarded 14 rural Texas counties across the state over \$4.2 million between April and June 2003 from the Texas Community Development Program (TCDP). The awards provide funding to help local volunteers install water and sewer infrastructure through TCDP's Texas Small Towns Environment Program (Texas STEP), a unique self-help program administered by ORCA.

The program provides funding options for equipment, expertise, and technical assistance to rural communities experiencing water and wastewater problems. "Texas STEP is an innovative approach to solving the water and wastewater needs in rural Texas," said Oralia Cardenas, Director of ORCA's TCDP. "Through this program, residents provide a certain percentage of the labor themselves. This self-help technique encourages small towns and counties to look within their own communities for resources to bring to the table."

ORCA Executive Director, Robt. J. "Sam" Tessen, MS, noted that communities working with *Texas STEP* grants and this self-help approach have saved more than 50 percent on retail construction costs. "This saves cities and counties significant amounts of money and maximizes the number of citizens each project benefits," he said. "Volunteers receive direction, technical expertise, and specialized equipment from ORCA and contract engineering crews."

The program is a collaborative effort between ORCA, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, the Texas Department of Health, the Texas Water Development Board, the General Land Office, and the Rensselaerville Institute of Rensselaerville, NY.

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is the funding source for this program.

### Awardees include:

Contractor	County	Amount
Alleyton	Colorado	\$350,000
Blanket	Brown	\$350,000
Bronte	Coke	\$275,500
Clint	El Paso	\$101,236
County	Franklin	\$299,300
County	Lamar	\$208,000
County	Red River	\$127,000
County	Wood	\$148,000
DeKalb	Bowie	\$350,000
Kennedy Ridge	Travis	\$295,000
Newsom	Camp	\$350,000
Nocona	Montague	\$348,200
Olney	Young	\$349,945
West Tawakoni	Hunt	\$321,590

**ORCA's Rural Texas  
Summit 2004  
is Coming!**

Look for more details in the next  
**Rural Texan!**

## Rural Research: Minorities in Rural America

A new report on rural minority poverty by the South Carolina Rural Health Research Center stresses that individual poverty (low incomes) and community poverty (limited economic resources overall) work together to limit economic opportunity and health care access. Policymakers must understand this reality in order to devise well-tailored solutions.

Public perception often tends to associate rural poverty with whites and urban poverty with minority populations, particularly African Americans and Hispanics. In reality, African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans who live in rural areas are not only more likely than rural whites to be poor but also more likely to live in communities that have tighter constraints on total economic resources.

Understanding this combination of individual and regional poverty is critical, according to a new report by the South Carolina Rural Health Research Center at the University of South Carolina in Columbia. The report, "Minorities in Rural America: An Overview of Population Characteristics," which is the first offering in a series that will address minority health issues, was prepared with the help of a grant from the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy.

Using existing data sources to create a profile of rural minority populations, the authors report that total community economic resources are more constrained when minority groups represent over half of the population. Counties with high concentrations of minorities typically have income and assets that are two-thirds of the national average. This suggests how difficult it is for rural communities to improve their economic status—and that it is nearly impossible for individual residents to improve their own status without leaving their communities.

Adapted from *Minorities in Rural America: An Overview of Population Characteristics* by Michael E. Samuels, DrPH, Janice Probst, PhD, and Sandra Glover, PhD.

To receive a copy of *Minorities in Rural America: An Overview of Population Characteristics*, contact the South Carolina Rural Health Research Center at 803-251-6317 or visit <http://ruralhealth.hrsa.gov/pub/MinoritiesinRuralAm.htm>.

## Low-Interest Mortgage Loans, Down Payment Assistance Available

The Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation (TSAHC) is a public, nonprofit corporation engaging in single-family and multifamily lending to targeted rural and underserved areas in Texas and is a statewide issuer of housing finance bonds for multifamily and single-family housing. TSAHC is not a Texas state agency, but is subject to significant oversight by the state and serves the housing needs of moderate- and lower-income Texans who may not be able to quality for housing finance options through conventional lending channels. Because of the allocation of mortgage revenue bonds, TSAHC is able to offer low-interest mortgage loans and down payment assistance.

The TSAHC administers most programs through participating lenders. For more information on TSAHC programs, call 512-377-3555 or 888-638-3555 or visit <http://www.tshac.org>.

## Capturing the Passion: Teaching Valuable Skills to a New Generation of Entrepreneurs

### Part 1 of 2 Part Series

By Ernesto Sirolli, Chairman and CEO of Sirolli Institute

Convinced that the future of every community lies in capturing the energy, imagination, intelligence, and passion of its people, the Sirolli Institute has created Enterprise Facilitation: a person-centered economic development system that is replicable, cost effective, and ethical. Enterprise Facilitation is founded on two fundamental tenets:

- Human nature is intrinsically good and the fulfillment of our talents, through work, improves our lives and the communities in which we live.
- Development is indigenous; it is a process that simply nurtures the elements already present within the community.

The pilot Enterprise Facilitation project, established in 1985 in Esperance, Western Australia, inspired 200 communities in Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and Canada to adopt similar approaches. This article begins to discuss the rationale for adopting Enterprise Facilitation, and advocates a person centered approach to economic development. In an upcoming article in the Fall edition of the Rural Texan, I will address the nature of entrepreneurship and the dynamics of teaching entrepreneurs management skills.

### Beware of the Hippos!

Very early in my life, I was exposed to planning disasters. I have since developed what I believe to be a healthy scepticism toward top-down initiatives that tend to disregard the abundant wisdom lying at the grass-roots level of any community. I owe my professional success- everything I do-to the family of hippos that came out of the Zambezi River one night and ate all the tomatoes that my Italian colleagues had lovingly planted...right by the river! We were in Zambezi to set up a training farm to transform hunters and gatherers into farmers: a strange objective in and of itself. Compared to the staggering blunders made by the international aid agencies, we failed modestly, and at least we retained a sense of humor: the hippos were fed! The African experience impressed upon me the fundamental importance of tapping local resources, skills, and knowledge. When engaging in local community and economic development, always look for the hippos! No matter how beautiful the landscape is and how friendly the locals are, watch out-the hippos are out there and ready to take a big

chunk out of your project and pride! We failed then in Africa, and we are still failing because of the arrogance that we Westerners carry like a birthmark-we never listen, we always know the solution, and we can answer the questions even before they have been asked.

### What is Development?

Development is more akin to gardening than to conjuring progress out of nothing at all. The husk of a seed must crack open to allow germination or -development - to occur. Certainly development is a more nurturing activity than a creative one. To develop implies engaging in a feminine, maternal, nurturing activity to create the pre-conditions for germination and growth to occur. This interpretation presents a great challenge to those among us involved in community and economic development. It obliges us to reconsider our role. Instead of doggedly researching and implementing projects we believe will help, we are asked to focus within the human heart, head, and hands. The only thing we can possibly do to foster real development is to create an environment that is conducive to the transformation of good ideas into viable and sustainable ventures. A shift from proactive to responsive development can only occur, however, if we believe that people are intrinsically good. The diversity, variety, and apparent randomness of their passions are like the superficial and chaotic-yet ecologically sound-life forms that can be found in an old growth forest. Indigenous development, in other words, requires a great deal of faith and an attitude adjustment. Right now, in our communities, there are people who have the commitment and motivation to help themselves: they just need some assistance to transform their ideas into meaningful and rewarding work. If we choose to become "gardeners" to them, we must accept gardening principles. We can create the necessary environment for growth, but ultimately, flowers bloom by themselves and if the husks are empty, nothing can grow out of them.

For more information about the Sirolli Institute, call 1-877-747-6554 or visit [www.sirolli.com](http://www.sirolli.com). In the upcoming fall edition of *The Rural Texan*, look for the second part to this article that will discuss development, structuring responsiveness, the Trinity of Management and teaching entrepreneurs.

## Texas Rural Policy to be Outlined in ORCA Report

By Jill McFarren, ORCA

As the state agency overseeing rural affairs, ORCA handles a broad spectrum of issues, such as agriculture, education, transportation, and water. This wide range of interests puts the agency in a unique position to accomplish one of its key mandates, to "develop a rural policy for the state in consultation with local leaders representing all facets of rural community life, academic and industry experts, and state elected and appointed officials with interests in rural communities." In the spirit of answering this call, ORCA is continuing the development of an "Outline for Texas' Rural Policy."

The Outline should be considered a framework of core objectives and principles of operation upon which additional input builds and transforms it into a more comprehensive document. Staff is in the process of revising and expanding the Outline. All rural Texans are invited to share ideas, comments, and concerns for consideration of publication in the 2003 Outline. Simply send your missives to ORCA no later than October 1, 2003.

### Why Does Rural Matter?

"Rural life is, at its core, a life of merit, doing work that matters."

- Brent Olson, Minnesota

"Rural matters because independence matters, because humility matters, because family matters, because community matters."

- William Kloefkorn, Nebraska

"Those of us who remain...are still humble in our understanding of life and nature, and we recognize each other as child-like in our wonder and appreciation of all the lessons we are taught, even when they are harsh."

- Lanniko L. Lee, South Dakota



# Sampling of Legislative State Bills with Rural Impact

June 2, 2003 marked the end of the 78th Legislature regular session. In total, both the House of Representatives and Senate passed 1,403 bills. Listed below is a sampling of state bills, which passed during the 78th Legislature that impact rural Texas.

For a complete listing of all the bills that impact rural Texas, visit the ORCA website or contact ORCA for hard copies.

## Agriculture

### Disease Control Legislation

*HB 2328 by Senator Todd Staples and Representative Jim McReynolds*

This bill addresses the influx of communicable diseases such as exotic Newcastle Disease and avian influenza in the Texas poultry industry by requiring persons selling, distributing or transporting live domestic or exotic fowl in Texas to register with the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC). TAHC may exempt persons already participating in a disease surveillance program.

### Other Agriculture Bills

*HB 1820 by Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr. and Representative Rene Oliveira*

This bill exempts work performed by a worker with an H2-A visa (an agricultural worker who is not a US citizen) from the definition of "employment," eliminating the requirement that employers report wages for these workers. Under federal law such workers are required to return to their native country and are not eligible for Unemployment Insurance benefits.

## Economic Development

*SB 275 by Senator Jane Nelson and Representatives Burt R. Solomons and Jim Keffer*

A comprehensive sunset bill that eliminates the Texas Department of Economic Development and transfers certain of its responsibilities to a newly created Texas Economic Development and Tourism Office in the Office of the Governor. Major functions of the office include: marketing and promoting Texas as a business and tourism destination; coordinating the tourism activities of other state agencies; providing business tax incentives; and providing access to business capital.

Of interest to rural areas, the office will include a new small business advocate and a new Product Development and Small Business Incubator Program. It will consolidate capital funds into an economic development bank, which may make it easier for interested parties to learn about available funds and tax incentives and make incentive grants to producers for the development of the fuel ethanol and bio-diesel industry and agricultural production.

*HB 2912 by Senator Bill Ratliff and Representative Mark Homer*

This bill clarifies the types of projects that can be financed with 4A and 4B economic development sales taxes. It also clarifies the types of new jobs that would make an employer eligible for tax incentives.

Of interest to rural areas: the bill limits incentives for job creation and retention to specific industry sectors (excludes retail); expands the definition of a project that can be funded

with 4A/4B sales tax revenue to include telecommunications and internet improvements; allows communities to hold elections after the initial ballot proposition for the purpose of authorizing additional projects; and expands residence requirements for directors of a corporation to an area up to 10 miles outside the city's or county's boundaries.

## Education

*SB 186 by Senator Kyle Janek and Representative Harold Dutton, Jr.*

This bill provides that the dropout rates included among the state's academic excellence indicators, which include dropout rates and district completion rates for grade levels nine through 12, must be computed in accordance with standards and definitions adopted by the National Center for Education Statistics of the United States Department of Education. The bill adds that the state's academic excellence indicators must also include high school graduation rates, which must be computed in accordance with standards and definitions adopted in compliance with the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Pub. L. No. 107-110).

*HB 3459 by Representative Jim Pitts*

This is a comprehensive bill that sunsets the current state system for public school finance on September 1, 2004, provided the legislature has enacted a new school finance system. In one of its many provisions, the bill provides an additional \$150 per student in average daily attendance for the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 school years. In addition, the bill increases the cap for the Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund from \$1.5 billion to \$1.75 billion and clarifies provisions relating to voluntary school consolidation.

## Healthcare

*HB 1420 by Senator Frank Madla and Representatives Rick Hardcastle*

This bill expands funding for the Physician Education Loan Repayment Program by requiring medical schools to set aside two percent of tuition charges for each student, rather than resident students. The funds are used to repay student loans of physicians serving in economically depressed or underserved areas as well as in certain state agencies.

*HB 2292 by Senator Jane Nelson and Representative Arlene Wohlgemuth*

This bill reorganizes all health and human service agencies into four agencies under the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC). Included in the bill are ways to consolidate and streamline the delivery of health and human services in Texas, in order to create a more efficient network and save the state money.

This bill centralizes authority in the HHSC, giving the commissioner great authority over the rulemaking and policy direction of HHS agencies. It also mandates the privatization of many state services, eliminating thousands of state jobs. Rural concerns include the potential loss of state jobs and the closure of offices and reduction of access to services that may result from cutting costs and streamlining operations.

## Natural Resources, Environment, Parks, and Wildlife

*HB 3607 Senator Kenneth Armbrister and Representative Harvey Hilderbran*

Hunting is one of the activities that can be used as part of a wildlife management plan to qualify land for open-space valuation for property tax purposes. This bill provides that the value of hunting leases on such properties is not to be included in the calculation of the "net to land" for taxation purpose.

## Office of Rural Community Affairs

*SB 446 by Senator Frank Madla and Representative Chente Quintanilla*

Clarifies and expands the purpose of the Rural Foundation associated with ORCA to include health, community, and economic development programs.

*HB 1877 by Representative Rick Hardcastle*

Requires ORCA to create a program to provide affordable relief services to rural physicians practicing in the fields of general family medicine, general medicine, and general pediatrics to facilitate the ability of those physicians to take time away from their practice.

## Transportation

*HB 1117 by Senator Bob Deuell and Representative Jim Keffer*

This bill allows county commissioners courts to propose and adopt a map as a means to clarify the existence of a public interest in a road.

*HB 3588 by Representative Mike Krusee*

A comprehensive transportation bill that implements the Trans-Texas Corridor program, changing the way highways and other transportation modes are funded and constructed. The bill directs TxDOT to designate facilities for the Corridor; expands the powers of regional mobility authorities; lays the groundwork for paying for future transportation projects with tolls; establishes surcharges for moving vehicle violations to fund trauma centers and transportation projects (105 designated trauma centers are in rural areas). Rural interests include property rights protection, taxes and tolls, and appropriate voice in decisions affecting rural areas and communities.

## Water Legislation

### Water Districts

*Senate Bill (SB) 1639 by Senator Todd Staples and Representative Reuber Hope*

This bill allows a groundwater conservation district to implement different rules for portions of an aquifer that differ substantially from one geographic area of the district to another. The bill creates a commission to study the many issues associated with instream flows, and it grants groundwater conservation districts the power to regulate the spacing of water wells and the production of groundwater based on contiguous acres.

### Water Conservation

*House Bill (HB) 1152 by Senator Craig Estes and Representative Robert Puente*

This bill amends the Texas Water Code to provide nonprofit water supply corporations the statutory authority to establish and enforce reasonable customer water conservation practices and to prohibit wasteful or excessive water use by allowing the assessment of reasonable penalties.

### Other Water Bills

*Senate Bill (SB) 1084 by Senator Frank Madla and Representative Chente Quintanilla*

This bill requires that a loan received through the Texas Water Development Board's (TWDB) Economically Distressed Areas Program (EDAP) is interest-free. EDAP loans are predominantly for water and wastewater infrastructure.

*HB 1875 by Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr. and Representative Miguel "Mike" Wise*

This bill clarifies legislation passed during the 77th Legislature for TWDB financing programs. Affected programs include the water infrastructure fund (WIF), rural water assistance fund (RWAF), rural community water and wastewater loan fund, and colonia self-help account. Reclassifies the WIF and the RWAF as special funds in the State Treasury and reclassifies the colonia self-help account as a separate account in TWDB's Water Assistance Fund. Also, allows for the RWAF to be used for wastewater projects.



# Learning Opportunities

## A Sampling of Opportunities Available to Rural Texans

### Conferences, Events Around Texas

**2003 Hispanic Health Summit - "Creating a Nexus for Hispanic Health: Effectively Linking Research, Public Awareness, Advocacy and Health Policy"** - A summit on Hispanic health beyond an overview of the health problems and issues toward a dialog about creating changes in public policy that effectively deals with these concerns. This summit will take place on October 10, 2003 in Houston, TX. For more information and to register, contact Alec Soto, 713-933-7000 or e-mail [asoto@asaresource.com](mailto:asoto@asaresource.com).

**6th Annual Staying Alive Conference: Two Decades of Positive Leadership** - This conference provides people living with HIV/AIDS with cutting edge health information needed to live longer, healthier lives; improve the skills of people living with HIV/AIDS in accessing and managing their health care, as well as legal and financial affairs; build leadership skills among people living with HIV/AIDS; create an opportunity for people living with HIV/AIDS to share their experiences and form networks of support and advocacy; and provide a venue to discuss issues such as stigma, spirituality, family and disclosure. This conference will take place on August 15-17, 2003. For more information, contact Charles Debnam at 202-898-0414 or e-mail [cdebnam@napwa.org](mailto:cdebnam@napwa.org).

**Rural Community College Alliance (RCCA): Revitalizing Rural Economics 2003 Conference** - RCCA 2003 is a national learning event for rural community colleges and their community partners. This conference will provide an opportunity for participants to learn about effective rural strategies to increase educational access, expand college capacity, and build the economy. This conference will take place on October 6-8, 2003 in San Antonio, TX. For more information, contact Pam Cooper at 515-294-8321 or visit <http://srdc.msstate.edu>.

**Far West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association Conference in Lajitas Headquarters:** The conference will take place September 24-26 in Lajitas on the Rio Grande. For more information, contact Ward County Commissioner Julian Florez at 915-943-3200.

**County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas Annual State Conference in Corpus Christi Headquarters:** The conference will take place on October 5-8 at the Omni Bayfront. For more information, contact Modelle Brudner, director of Community Affairs for Harris County Judge Robert Eckels, at 713-755-4014.

**Asset Management Training** - This seminar includes asset-based budgets, capital planning, financial planning, and site management and will take place throughout the year at locations across the nation. The program is sponsored by Rural Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). For information, contact your local LISC office or call Maria Gutierrez at 212-455-9319.

**International Conference on Agricultural Science and Technology (ICAST)** - The 2003 ICAST will bring together scientists, academics, government policymakers, business and industry leaders from around the world with the goal of sharing knowledge, building consensus, and developing leadership. The conference will be held on October 12-15, 2003 at the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston, Texas. For more information, call 979-862-1219 or visit [www.2003icast.org](http://www.2003icast.org).

**National Center for Small Communities (NCSC): America's Town Meeting -Legislative and Educational Conference 2003** - As a local leader, you have a duty to each present and future citizen of your community to ensure a brighter tomorrow. The 2003 National Conference workshops should prove to be varied enough to have something for everyone and cover the major issues facing Small Town Leaders. The conference will take place September 3-5, 2003 in Washington, DC. For more information, contact NCSC staff at 202-624-3555 or visit [www.smallcommunities.org](http://www.smallcommunities.org).

**The National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO): Building a Stronger America Through Housing, Economic & Community Development** - NAHRO's 2003 National Conference and Exhibition provides a unique educational opportunity for housing and community development policy makers and practitioners to network with some of the best and brightest experts in our industry and to learn how public, private, and nonprofit groups, working together, can create effective affordable housing. This conference will take place on October 19-22, 2003 in Dallas, TX. For more information and to register, call 877-866-2476 or visit [www.nahro.org](http://www.nahro.org).

### Continuing Education Opportunities

**"Evaluating Programs for HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care in Developing Countries: A Handbook for Program Managers and Decision Makers"** - The Family Health International website has a very useful reference describing the latest conceptual and methodological approaches to evaluating HIV prevention programs. The reference is applicable to many projects well beyond AIDS. Check out the handbook on-line at <http://www.fhi.org/en/gen/nbook.srep.html> or call 919-544-7040.

**CharityAdvantage Technology Programs-** CharityAdvantage serves thousands of nonprofits through technology programs including discounted computers, laptops, software and website hosting. Services include full parts/labor warranties and tech support as well as free hardware consulting and custom orders. For more information, call 610-725-9995 or visit [www.charityadvantage.com](http://www.charityadvantage.com).

**Internet Portal for Nonprofits Announces New Free Tool for Nonprofits** - MyNoodle, the Internet portal for nonprofit news information and resources, announced today the launch of their new Media Guide for nonprofits. The Media Guide is a free service for the nonprofit sector, intended to provide nonprofit organizations with the tools and resources to send press releases and information to news agencies without having to invest a lot of money or time. Access the Media Guide through the MyNoodle main page at [www.mynoodle.org](http://www.mynoodle.org) or call 508-831-1310.

**Nonprofit Good Practice Guide** - The Nonprofit Good Practice Guide provides a library of information on fundraising, governance, accountability, volunteer management, marketing, and more. For more information, call 616-331-7585 or visit [www.nonprofitbasics.org](http://www.nonprofitbasics.org).

**Find, Review, and Submit Comments on Federal Documents on New Website** - The federal government has a new website that makes it easier for you to participate in the federal rulemaking process. On this site, you can find, review, and submit comments on federal documents that are open for

comment and published in the *Federal Register*. For more information, call 888-293-6498 or visit [www.regulation.gov](http://www.regulation.gov).

**Grantseeker Tips** - Grantseeker Tips is a free, bi-weekly electronic newsletter that helps you inspire, sustain, and trouble-shoot your grantseeking and fundraising activities. For more information, visit [www.MinerAndAssociates.com](http://www.MinerAndAssociates.com).

**Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA): 2004 Class of Young Masters** - Every two years, the TCA awards the Young Masters Scholarship to talented 8th through 12th grade Texas students. It is a unique program offering Texas students advanced arts training so that when they apply for college programs or art schools they will have an extra competitive edge. For more information, call 512-936-6564 or visit [www.arts.state.tx.us](http://www.arts.state.tx.us).

**Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA): County Arts Expansion Program (CAEP)** - A special program that allows the TCA to put money into counties with populations of 50,000 or less that have not been served by the TCA in the recent past. For more information, contact Jim Bob McMillian at 512-936-6752 or visit [www.arts.state.tx.us](http://www.arts.state.tx.us).

### Free Teacher Recruiting Service Available to NREA Members

The National Rural Education Association (NREA) is proud to announce a new partnership with USA Employment, a Houston based company that is helping schools across America - rural and otherwise - combat the growing teacher shortage by recruiting and placing certified, experienced and dedicated teachers from other English-speaking countries in those schools. The service is free for NREA Members, and USA Employment handles all work visa paperwork. Every NREA school is eligible to partake in this program, regardless of the schools' size or location.

"Rural schools across America have unique challenges associated with finding good teachers, especially in the hard-to-fill subject areas," said Jason Lyons, USA Employment Vice President. "Recruiting recent college graduates is difficult because many prefer urban or suburban settings. But the teachers in our program are anxious to come to America - they aren't as concerned with where they are placed."

Every USA Employment teacher is certified in the country in which they currently teach, and possess the requisite college hours equivalent to an American bachelor's degree. They average five to eight years of experience, and most teachers possess one or more graduate level degrees.

NREA member schools can review resumes and video clips of teachers anytime, with no obligation, by visiting [www.usaemployment.org](http://www.usaemployment.org). If there is an interest in one or more of the candidates, the school can coordinate further interviews with USA Employment's assistance. Once a school selects a teacher, USA Employment will handle all work visa paperwork and will work closely with the teacher to coordinate all relocation efforts. The work visas are approved in 15 days or less, enabling teachers to be hired year-round.

For more information, call 832-722-7454 or e-mail [Jason@usaemployment.org](mailto:Jason@usaemployment.org).



# Funding Opportunities

## A Sampling of Opportunities Available to Rural Texans

### Funds Available for Health, Research Services

**Hospice Funding Initiative : HCR Manor Care Foundation (HCRMCF)** - The HCR Manor Care Foundation primarily provides funding to nonprofit organizations serving the elderly population in order to enhance the quality of life of the community it serves. The Hospice Funding Initiative will support community-based programs, research and education initiatives that address hospice and palliative care. The deadline for this grant is October 15, 2003. For more information, contact Jennifer Steiner at 419-252-5989 or visit [www.hcr-manorcare.com](http://www.hcr-manorcare.com).

**Technology for People with Disabilities: NEC Foundation of America** - The NEC Foundation of America has announced that, beginning this year, its sole focus will be on technology for people with disabilities. Grants will be awarded to nonprofit organizations in support of the development, application, and use of technology by and for people with disabilities. All proposals should demonstrate national reach and impact. For more information, call 631-753-7021 or visit [www.necfoundation.org](http://www.necfoundation.org).

**The Collaborative HIV - Prevention Research in Minority Communities Program** - This program is designed to assist scientists/researchers already conducting HIV-prevention research with ethnic minority communities to improve their programs of research and obtain additional funding for their work. For more information, call 415-597-6162 or visit [www.caps.ucsf.edu](http://www.caps.ucsf.edu).

**Traineeships in AIDS Prevention Studies (TAPS) Program** - This program invites applications for two- and three-year postdoctoral fellowships in studies relating to the prevention of AIDS. For more information, contact Rochelle Hartwig at 415-597-9260 or e-mail [rhartwig@psg.ucsf.edu](mailto:rhartwig@psg.ucsf.edu).

**MetLife Foundation** - The MetLife Foundation supports health, education, civic affairs, and culture. In the area of health, to meet the Foundation's goal of helping people make more informed decisions about their health, grants are directed toward national health promotion and education initiatives, particularly for young people. For more information, call 800-638-5433 or visit [www.metlife.com/Applications/Corporate/WPS/CDA/PageGenerator/0,1674,P284,00.html](http://www.metlife.com/Applications/Corporate/WPS/CDA/PageGenerator/0,1674,P284,00.html).

### Housing, Community Development Funding Available

**Texas Parks and Wildlife Department: Community Outdoor Outreach Program** - This program helps to introduce under-served populations to the services, programs, and facilities of Texas Parks & Wildlife Department. Grants are awarded to non-profit organizations, schools, municipalities, counties, cities, and other groups. For more information, call 512-912-7124 or visit [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/grants/grants.htm#outdoor](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/grants/grants.htm#outdoor).

**Texas Parks and Wildlife Department: Small Community Grants** - This grant program was created in 2001 to meet the recreation needs of small Texas communities with a population of 20,000 and under. The grant provides 50% matching grant funds (maximum \$50,000) to eligible

municipalities, counties, and other government entities. For more information, call 512-912-7124 or visit <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/grants/grants.htm#outdoor>.

### Other Funding Opportunities

**Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: Faith in Action Funding Expands** - This programs bring together religious congregations of all faiths, and other community organizations such as hospices, clinics, and hospitals, in a common mission to provide volunteer care to their neighbors in need. For more information, call 877-324-8411 or visit the program website at <http://www.fiavolunteers.org>.

**Environmental Health Sciences' (NIEHS) and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)** - This program supports research aimed at achieving environmental justice for socioeconomically disadvantaged and medically underserved populations in the United States. For more information, contact Shobha Srinivasan at 919-541-2506 or visit <http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-ES-03-007.html>.

**Environmental Projects for Children and Youth: Captain Planet Foundation (CPF)** - The mission of the Captain Planet Foundation is to fund and support hands-on environmental projects for children and youth. The foundation works to encourage innovative programs that empower children and youth around the world to work individually and collectively to solve environmental problems in their neighborhoods and communities. For more information, call 404-827-4130, e-mail [captain.planet.foundation@turner.com](mailto:captain.planet.foundation@turner.com) or visit [www.captainplanetfdn.org](http://www.captainplanetfdn.org).

**Women Helping Others (WHO) Foundation: Funding to Grassroots charities serving Women and Children** - The WHO Foundation provides funding to grassroots charities serving the overlooked needs of women and children in the United States and Puerto Rico. For more information, call 1-800-WHO-4-ONE or visit <http://www.whofoundation.org>.

**Institute of Youth Development** - Grants for free grant writing workshop for faith-based and community-based organizations that have never been awarded a federal grant. For information, contact Fr. John Roddy, 703-471-8750 or visit [www.youthdevelopment.org](http://www.youthdevelopment.org).

**Department of Energy: Controlled Hydrogen Fleet and Infrastructure Demonstration and Validation Project** - This program provides financial assistance to applications with the objective of supporting industry efforts and the President's Hydrogen Fuel Initiative in developing a path to a hydrogen economy. For more information, contact James Damm, Contracting Officer, via facsimile to 303-275-4788 or visit <http://e-center.doe.gov>.

**United States Institute of Peace: Senior Fellowship Competition** - This program provides Senior Fellowships from scholars or practitioners who conduct research related to the peaceful resolution of international conflict. Fellowship entails residence at agency in Washington, DC, for up to ten months beginning October 1, 2004. For more information, call 202 457-1719 or visit <http://www.usip.org>.

**Department of Education: Office of Innovation and Improvement—Advanced Placement (AP) Test Fee Program** - The program is designed to increase the number of low-income students who take advanced placement tests and receive scores for which college academic credit is awarded.

For more information, call 800-USA-LEARN, e-mail [madeline.baggett@ed.gov](mailto:madeline.baggett@ed.gov), or visit <http://www.ed.gov/pbs/edpubs.html>.

### More than \$2.3 Billion Available Through HUD's SuperNOFA

Over \$2.3 billion in US Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds are now available through competitive programs that serve homeless persons, produce affordable housing, stimulate economic development, and protect children from the dangers of lead poisoning. Using the fiscal year 2003 SuperNOFA (Notification of Funding Availability), units of local government, faith-based and other nonprofit community organizations can take advantage of 43 separate funding opportunities.

This year's SuperNOFA includes everything an applicant needs to prepare their HUD funding request. For the first time, applicants will no longer be required to seek additional information from HUD that is integral in completing their funding requests. This one-stop approach will greatly expedite and simplify the application process.

Each of the programs included in the SuperNOFA has different statutory and congressionally mandated requirements for determining which organizations are eligible to apply for funding. Once an organization meets the requirements for a particular SuperNOFA program, they can apply directly for funds through HUD.

The funds are in addition to the more than \$30.2 billion HUD allocates to communities through block grants, housing choice vouchers, and other formula-based funding. This year's funding notice explains the application process that will ultimately award \$1.822 billion in targeted housing and homeless assistance; \$241 million in community development funding; and \$231 million in economic development.

For more information, eligibility requirements, and applications, call 202-708-1112 or visit <http://www.hud.gov/offices/adm/grants/fundsavail.cfm>.

### Texas Ranks #1...

...in the US in production of oil, natural gas, cattle, sheep, wool, rice, watermelon, and cotton.

...in the US in highway mileage, with over 70,000 miles and first in railroad mileage.

...in the nation in the sale of pick-up trucks.

...in the US as one of the top producers of forest products.

...in the world with the largest military base, Fort Hood, located in Killeen (Bell County).

Source: Ronnie S. Hilliard, <http://gotexas.about.com>

## ORCA Expands Outreach, Encourages Information Sharing Networks

By Jill McFarren, ORCA

In this time of federal, state, and local budget constraints, collaborative partnerships are fast becoming a necessity for state agencies, small community governments, and interest groups. Sharing information is often times an overlooked opportunity as groups tend to focus on specific goals and projects rather than working together and sharing resources to meet mutual goals. However, information sharing partnerships and networks greatly benefit rural Texans in many ways and for many reasons.

For example, as a state agency designed to support "all things rural," ORCA often receives information regarding funding, trainings, and other opportunities available from federal, state, private, and non-profit groups in support of various rural community interests. ORCA's broad purview requires diverse outreach efforts that include low-cost, efficient methods to distribute information to appropriate audiences across the state. Building a network of public and private organizations that will help ORCA distribute information is a priority for the young agency.

"Information is power," said Robt. J. "Sam" Tessen, MS, ORCA's Executive Director. "We want to empower our constituents by providing them with the information and opportunities they need to address their goals. We want to use every resource open to us to get the right information to the right people at the right time."

As a first step, ORCA has begun mailing *The Rural Texan*, to members of various associations representing interests in cattle, cotton, education, healthcare, housing, oil, transportation, and water interests, to name a few. These organizations are encouraged to distribute information to their constituents, who in turn may spread the information to their colleagues, and so on.

If you would like to become part of ORCA's information sharing network, please fill out the Name / Address Action Request Form on page 2.

## ORCA's TCDP: A Look at the Funding, Application Processes

By Linda Trinh, ORCA

ORCA's Texas Community Development Program (TCDP) administers the nation's largest Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. The CDBG program is a flexible, community-based, federal grant program that provides much-needed resources to small rural communities. The goal of CDBG is to build viable communities by providing decent housing, suitable living environments, and expanding economic opportunities, principally for Texans of low and moderate incomes. TCDP administers eight programs designed to meet these goals.

Each year ORCA's TCDP program is reviewed and revised to meet current needs. Depending on the funding programs, the application process can include a number of different review and scoring methods. In general, the process includes:

### Developing a Framework (Action Plan)

ORCA staff develops an Action Plan, which describes how program funds will be administered over the upcoming funding cycle. This draft incorporates past experience with the programs and past public comments received.

### Public Hearings

The public guides the development of program administration to ensure that funding supports the projects most needed by rural communities. Public hearing notices are mailed to all eligible applicants and posted to the Texas Register. A copy of the Action Plan is discussed with the public at these public

hearings. Following the public hearings, the Action Plan is revised to reflect public input gathered.

### Workshops

Upon completion of the development of the Action Plan, ORCA coordinates application workshops, which are offered each year to help applicants with completing funding applications. Application workshops are held in various locations throughout the state, and are scheduled depending on the application deadlines for each funding program.

### Selection Process

The process for selecting applications for funding may involve the evaluation or scoring of the applications by TCDP staff or a combined scoring process from TCDP staff and a Regional Review Committee (RCC), which consists of locally appointed officials from the Governor.

### Scoring

Applications for funding programs that require scoring are reviewed and scored by TCDP staff for completeness and eligibility to determine whether the application is complete and all proposed activities are program eligible. TCDP adds scores related to community distress and project design to determine competition rankings. After application scoring is completed by TCDP staff, applicants are notified of the final scores and funding recommendations.

### Funding Recommendations

Following the final technical review, TCDP staff submit the program year funding recommendations to ORCA's Executive Director. Applications of \$300,000 or more are directed to ORCA's executive committee for review and then to ORCA's executive director for final authorization.

### Distribution of Funds

For competitive grant programs, funds are distributed to the highest scored applicants and downward until all funds are exhausted.

For more information, visit ORCA's website.

## Get to know the Texas Register

The *Texas Register*, a weekly publication, serves as the notice bulletin of state agency rulemaking. The *Texas Register* contains emergency, proposed, and adopted rules; notices of withdrawn and repealed rules; notices of rule review and other information submitted by state agencies for publication, including open meeting information.

Here is a sampling of Frequently Asked Questions about the information posted in the Register:

### How does the open meeting system work?

The Open Meetings Act (Government Code, Chapter 551) provides that meetings of governmental bodies must be open to the public (except for expressly authorized executive sessions). Both state and regional agencies file notices of open meetings with the Secretary of State's office. State agencies are governmental bodies with statewide jurisdiction. Regional agencies are agencies with jurisdiction of four or more counties.

### When does a rule become effective?

Typically, a rule takes effect 20 days after the date on which it is filed with the Secretary of State. (For exceptions see Texas Gov't Code 2001.036). Day one is the date following the filing, and the rule may take effect on day 20. Note that the time period for an adopted rule is triggered by filing. This differs from the time period for a proposed rule, which does not begin until the rule is published in the "Texas Register."

### How is a rule different from a statute?

Statutes are created or amended by the Legislature. Rules are adopted by state agencies (Executive branch), usually with specific rulemaking authority from the Legislature.

### Where can I find the statutes?

You can find the on-line version at the Texas Legislature Online web site at [www.capitol.state.tx.us/](http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/) Alternative sources of assistance might include a public library, or the Legislative Reference Library at 512-463-1252.

The *Texas Register* is located on the Texas Secretary of State's website at [www.sos.state.tx.us](http://www.sos.state.tx.us) Visit the site for more information, or call toll free 800-226-7199.

### Only a Texan knows...

Only a *True Texan* knows the difference between a hissie fit and a conniption and that you don't "have" them, but "pitch" them.

Even *True Texas* babies know that "Gimme some sugar" is not a request for the white, granular sweet substance that sits in a pretty little bowl in the middle of the table.

When you ask someone how they're doing and they reply, "Fair to middlin," you know you are in the presence of a genuine *Texan*.

*True Texans* never refer to one person as "y'all."

No *True Texan* would ever assume that the car with the flashing turn signal is actually going to make a turn.

A *True Texan* can show or point out to you the general direction of "yonder."

*True Texans* know that "fixin'" can be used as a noun, a verb or an adverb.

And, a *True Texan* knows you don't scream obscenities at little old ladies who drive 30 mph on the freeway. You say, "Bless her heart" and go on your way.

Source: Larry L. Crabtree, *The Vernon Daily Record*

### Want to E-mail ORCA?

To e-mail a member of the ORCA staff, address the message to the staff member's first initial and full last name@orca.state.tx.us.

For example, to e-mail Linda Trinh use [ltrinh@orca.state.tx.us](mailto:ltrinh@orca.state.tx.us).

Just want to send comments to the agency in general?

Send your e-mail to [orca@orca.state.tx.us](mailto:orca@orca.state.tx.us).

# Rural Texans tells it like it is

## Rural Texans speak up at ORCA public hearings

By Jill McFarren, ORCA

In late June, the Office of Rural Community Affairs (ORCA) began actively seeking input from rural Texans on the agency's programs and services, which provide over \$80 million in development opportunities to rural communities throughout the state. ORCA held eight public hearings across the state to receive comments on the agency's proposed Action Plan for the 2004 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, Rural Health Work Plan, and the "Outline for Texas' Rural Policy" and "Status of Rural Texas" reports. ORCA representatives also welcomed public comment on all other agency programs, services and activities.

The CDBG Action Plan defines the application selection process for grant awards available through the eight funding categories within the over \$80 million CDBG program. The categories focus on projects that meet 'basic human needs' such as safe and sanitary sewer systems, clean drinking water, disaster relief and urgent needs projects, housing, drainage and flood control, passable streets, economic development, and other eligible activities. The CDBG program is funded through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The Rural Health Work Plan, which is developed every odd-numbered year, includes how ORCA will assist rural communities in meeting health care needs; ways to address unmet health care needs in rural communities; ways to coordinate the administration and delivery of rural health care with federal, state, and local public and private programs; and ORCA's priorities to accomplish the objectives of the plan.

The agency's "Outline for Texas' Rural Policy" report serves as a reference tool for decision and policymakers, stakeholders, state agencies, and state, regional, local elected officials, and individuals. The document explains the issues and processes that go into the development and

implementation of legislative policy.

The "Status of Rural Texas" encompasses a broad spectrum of issues that affect rural communities, and includes a variety of state government actions directed toward those areas or issues.

"Public comments, ideas, and suggestions drive ORCA," said William Jeter, chair of the agency's executive committee. "For ORCA to be successful in helping the rural communities we serve, we need to know what our priorities should be. These hearings offer a way for rural Texans to tell us their thoughts."

"ORCA's overall goal is to partner with rural Texans so we can be a responsive, effective state agency. We need the public to help us deliver on that charge," said Robt. J. "Sam" Tessen, MS, ORCA's Executive Director. "We encourage every rural Texan to give us their comments and suggestions so we can better meet their needs."

The public hearings were held in the following locations:

City	County
Dimmit	Castro
Ft. Stockton	Pecos
Eldorado	Schleicher
Alice	Jim Wells
Rusk	Cherokee
Seymour	Baylor
Eagle Lake	Colorado
Johnson City	Blanco

A copy of ORCA's CDBG Action Plan, Rural Health Work Plan, "Outline for Texas' Rural Policy" and "Status of Rural Texas" reports are available on the agency's website at [www.orca.state.tx.us](http://www.orca.state.tx.us). Hard copies may also be obtained by calling the agency.

If you have an idea, suggestion, or comment for ORCA, simply send your missive to the agency by fax, email or postal service.

RWHC Eye on Health



"Whatever happens, the Government better not get involved with my Medicare."

Cartoon by Tim Size, Executive Director, Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative. Reprinted with permission.

Oh, the places you can go and the difference you can make!

Don't miss  
Rural Texas' Annual  
"Healthcare Job Fair"!

September 6-7, 2003

Register Now!

Contact ORCA for more information.

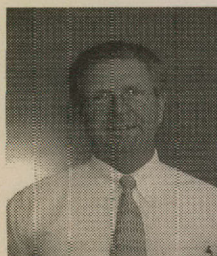
## ORCA Asks:

### What is the difference between community development and economic development?



"My own thoughts echo those of many others. A rural community cannot have economic development without community development. Economic development has essentially four components - recruitment of external business and industry, expansion of existing business and industry, entrepreneurship development, and tourism. The latter includes all the reasons people will come to the rural community. These reasons include athletic events, class reunions, festivals and events, nature and eco tourism, cultural and heritage attractions, hunting and fishing, and many more. The latter three are the most important, and it is fairly easy to see the relationships between economic development and community development. Without trusted leadership, a sense of community, infrastructure, functioning local government, beautification, and all the other components of community, economic development is not going to take place."

Joe McFarland, President, Texas Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils



"When looking at community development vs economic development here are some characteristics: Community development is the 'foundation' work that needs to be done before effective economic development can be implemented. By 'foundation' I mean the basics a community needs to get prepared for economic development. It includes such things as water and waste water infrastructure, roads, education, telecommunications, workforce training, cleanliness of the area, leadership development, healthcare, comprehensive planning, housing, and so on and so forth.

"In comparison, economic development is the process of searching for or creating more jobs by trying to attract new businesses to the town or expanding existing ones. Many towns desperately try to pursue economic development without doing the basics first, only to find that a business interested in their area will not come because of the lack of infrastructure needs or other factors listed above that should have been addressed through community development. Both of these are interconnected and can, to some extent, be worked on simultaneously. However, community development is the first and most important of the two concepts if a community is serious about growth and survival."

Charlie Stone, Director of Outreach and Training, ORCA



"Two of the best known writers in the field - James Christenson and Jerry Robinson - have said that community development means many things to many people. They point out that depending on who is doing the defining for what purpose, development itself (whether community or economic) can mean improvement, growth or just change. Generally, whichever of these concepts is employed community is considered as having various aspects, the economy being one. However, where most successful, the two are not mutually exclusive but reinforcing efforts involving and affecting members of the community in some positive manner, as collectively defined by those individuals. In practical applications, broadly involving the population in focusing on commonalities between community and economic development has been shown to produce more positive results than separate interest groups approaching them differentially."

Dr. Gregory Taylor, Professor and State Leader for Community Programs, Texas Cooperative Extension

## Loan Program Offers Communities Opportunities for Cleaning Water

There's a stream of pollution making its way into Texas waterways—nonpoint source pollution (NPS), or polluted runoff. But the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) has a way to help local entities dam up this unwanted stream.

"Nonpoint source pollution can be a difficult type of pollution to stop, since it is not tied to a single, obvious source, such as an oil spill or industrial run off," says Jeff Walker, assistant director of TWDB.

Instead, NPS comes from a number of sources, such as fertilizers from over-treated lawns, herbicides, insecticides, oil and grease, sediments, cigarette butts and animal waste, all of which wind up in water bodies when it rains, he says.

### The nitty gritty

Nearly 21 million people, 14.3 million head of cattle and millions of other creatures call Texas home. People and animals generate waste, and that waste can contaminate the state's water. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) says NPS is the nation's largest water quality problem.

In addition, Texas' population is expected to nearly double over the next 50 years, according to the TWDB's 2002 Texas State Water Plan, which means an increase in the state's water demand and the amount of NPS waste contaminating Texas streams, rivers and lakes. Those water bodies will provide 66 percent of the additional water needed to meet the state's needs by 2050, according to the plan.

### Seeing green

TWDB provides leadership and technical services to support planning, conservation and responsible development of water for Texas.

TWDB hopes to help local entities decontaminate public waters by offering low-interest loans for nonpoint source pollution abatement projects, tagged the Nonpoint Source Pollution Program.

The program makes loans to public and private entities such as towns, counties, and conservation districts at 0.7 percent below the market rate with a maximum repayment period of 20 years. Taxable entities receive a rate that is 140 percent of the rate received by tax-exempt borrowers. To qualify for the loans, the entity must use them for abating NPS.

Eligible projects include planning, designing and constructing NPS pollution control activities and developing and implementing comprehensive conservation and management plans associated with the EPA's National Estuary Program. Congress created the National Estuary Program in 1987 to protect public water supplies and wildlife in certain estuaries.

Adapted from an article in the June 2003 *Fiscal Notes* by Allison Castle.

For the copy of this complete article, call 888-334-4112 or visit <http://www.window.state.tx.us/comptrol/fnotes/fn0306/point.html>.

**Do you still want to receive *The Rural Texan*?**

Remember to fill out the **Name / Address Action Request Form** on page 2 and return it to ORCA!

## Shaping the Future of South Texas

### The "Future of the Region" Project

By Ernest Gerlach, Center for Economic Development at the University of Texas at San Antonio

South Texas encompasses a 47-county area that houses around 3.4 million people. As a region, South Texas has tremendous economic potential. It is also a region that is being transformed by forces that are vast in scope, and powerful in their impacts. These forces include a growing worldwide economy that is becoming more interdependent everyday, and the creation of new kinds of partnerships and strategic alliances that span the globe. Yet, despite these forces and its economic progress over the past decade, South Texas still continues to be burdened by widespread poverty, severe economic distress, and a host of other concerns that limit its long-term prospects. How to confront these very complex needs and concerns has been a continuing challenge for the Center for Economic Development at the University of Texas at San Antonio: Future of the Region, Inc., a regional partnership committed to the future of South Texas, and others in the region.

Since its inception in 1993, the Future of the Region, Inc. has sought to bring the region's leadership together by building an action agenda and a strategy to deal with several key issues directly and indirectly impacting the long-term growth prospects of South Texas.

These key issues include:

- The development of a competitive, world class workforce in the region;
- The implementation of a sustainable growth process that is able to build on the region's existing assets and resources;
- The protection of the region's unique environmental assets;
- The development of a health care system that is able to meet the needs of all citizens in South Texas; and
- The development of an integrated infrastructure base that can support and facilitate economic growth in the region.

To move forward with this agenda, Future of the Region, Inc. has convened six region wide conferences, several forums, and numerous working groups to develop a series of strategies based on goals, objectives, priorities, and action initiatives. These initiatives have resulted in bringing the region's leadership together to focus on specific outcomes and policies. Equally important, they have led to a better understanding of the needs of the region, and how these needs can be addressed in an effective manner.

Several key principles have guided the Future of the Region process over the past decade. These include the following:

- If South Texas is to make progress it must address its needs from a long-term perspective.
- In order to effectively deal with its needs, problems and concerns, the region's leadership must embrace a holistic, comprehensive thinking process that takes into account the entire region.
- To ensure success the region's leadership must also learn to work together in a collaborative manner.

These three principles have provided the necessary framework to allow the Future of the Region, Inc.'s board of directors and its partners to move forward with the development of a coherent regional agenda.

Over the past ten years, Future of the Region, Inc. has sought to better understand the complex forces impacting South Texas. By understanding these forces, it will allow them to address the pervasive problems of poverty, economic dislocation, low incomes, poor schools, the lack of jobs, rural needs, the plight of small communities, and a host of other concerns that limit the regions growth. The development and implementation of regional based action agendas can achieve positive results if the region's leadership is able to embrace them. The challenge facing South Texas today is to bring its political, business, and civic leadership together to agree on a set of common goals and strategies. The alternative is to continue to rely on obsolete, fragmented, and incremental solutions. The future of South Texas lies in the ability of the leadership to forge a consensus and an action agenda that can mobilize its talent, assets, and resources to facilitate the development of the region and to transform it into a major player in the global economy of the 21st century.

## State of Aging, Health in America: A Report Card

The Merck Institute of Aging and Health (MIAH), and the Gerontological Society of America (GSA) recently released a report on aging and health in America. The report looked at ten different health indicators listed for older people in the Healthy People 2000 (HP 2000) document that was first published in 1990.

HP 2000 set health goals for people of all ages that were to be met by the year 2000. For the over 65-year group, ten goals were identified. The MIAH and GSA report looked at how these goals or indicators were met. The report also reviewed the US as a whole and then each state individually. The report card is a mixed bag. In some areas, goals were met, but in many others, goals were not attained.

The report showed that as a nation, the US met or passed only four of the 10 goals. The 10 indicators are broken down into three categories:

#### Health Behaviors

- No Physical Activity during Leisure-Time in past month
- Overweight
- Eating 5+ Fruits/Vegetables daily

- Current Smoker
- Preventive Care and Cancer Screening
  - Flu Vaccine in past year
  - Ever had Pneumonia Vaccine
  - Mammogram within past 2 years
  - Ever had Colorectal Screening
- Fall-Related Deaths and Injuries (per 100,000)
  - Hip Fractures, 65+
  - Fall-related deaths, 85+

While the nation and Texas met important goals for smoking, colorectal screening, mammograms and flu vaccinations, it failed to meet targets for physical exercise, nutrition, weight, pneumonia vaccines and injuries and death due to falls.

Adapted from an article by John A. Belzer, PhD in the Spring 2003 issue of the *Oklahoma AHEC News*.

To see the complete "State of Aging and Health in America" report, call 202-842-0525 or visit [www.miahonline.org](http://www.miahonline.org).

(See related article on page 1.)

## Best Rural Practices Not Always Small Urban:

### The Environmental Context of Patient Safety and Medical Errors

Interest in the issue of patient safety and medical errors has accelerated over the last decade, most recently culminating in widespread media attention and policy consideration by state and national levels of government, accrediting bodies, health care organizations, and employer groups. The purpose of this paper, "The Environmental Context of Patient Safety and Medical Errors," is to explore the environmental context of patient safety and medical errors in rural settings. We review the patient safety and medical error literature, point out unique features of rural health care organizations and their environment that relate to the patient safety issue and medical errors, summarize relevant organizational theory, and conclude by discussing strategies for medical error reduction and prevention in rural health care settings.

This paper will discuss rural-urban differences in hospital processes, information flows, the culture of safety, and organizational learning and develop the following hypotheses about these differences:

- Rural hospitals will have a greater proportion of adverse events associated with the elderly than urban hospitals.
- Rural hospitals will have a lower proportion of adverse events associated with over learning (*a high volume related error*) than urban hospitals but a greater proportion of adverse events associated with medical training that emphasizes work in a more specialized environment.
- Rural hospitals will have a lower proportion of adverse events associated with information flows between the patient and the hospital than urban hospitals due to enhanced social embeddedness.
- Rural hospitals will have a greater proportion of adverse events associated with informal communication processes within the hospital than urban hospitals.
- Rural hospitals will have a greater proportion of adverse

events associated with triage-and-transfer decisions and a greater proportion of adverse events associated with *transporting patients than urban hospitals*.

- Rural hospitals will find it easier than urban hospitals to build a culture of safety based on a feeling of being in a community, but will find it more difficult to build tools such as anonymous reporting systems.

The paper concludes by discussing how learning processes can be developed in rural hospitals to help health services researchers to work effectively as partners with rural hospitals. Two questions need to be examined to understand how organizational learning to improve patient safety can be facilitated in rural hospitals:

- When and how should rural hospitals explore new technologies (i.e. global technologies) and processes by adopting them?
- When and how should rural hospitals exploit their existing technology and processes by refining them?

These are fundamentally different strategies to reduce errors. Because organizations have budget and personnel constraints, they often cannot pursue both simultaneously. However, doing either one exclusively can lead to sub-optimal performance. Two strategies are identified for helping rural hospitals to manage the learning process about errors:

- Decrease system ambiguity, formalize technologies to decrease uncertainty, and identify countable events that can be monitored.
- Develop common measures across rural hospitals that allow them to determine if they are falling into a competency trap.

The time to learn about patient safety, medical errors and successful interventions in rural hospitals and environments is now. The reduced scale and complexity of rural institutions provide an excellent laboratory for examining patient safety and medical error issues. An important next step is financial and technical support for the systematic collection of data from rural hospitals and other entities that will lead to relevant patient safety practices for rural America.

Adapted from *The Environmental Context of Patient Safety and Medical Errors* by Douglas Wholey, Ira Moscovice, Terry Hietpas, and Jeremy Holtzman.

For a complete copy of this paper, contact Jane Raasch at 612-625-0955 or e-mail raasc001@umn.edu.

## Utilizing Technology for Small Water Systems in Texas

By Linda Trinh, ORCA

As reported in the Spring 2003 edition in "The Rural Texan," ORCA selected the University of Texas-Pan American's Office of Center Operations and Community Services (CoSERVE) to complete one of the three components of the "Water: Preparing Today for Texas' Future in the 21st Century" Project.

CoSERVE was chosen to conduct a study on the inventories of small water projects, technologies, and impediments and their focus included identifying, inventorying, and describing examples of pending and/or successful water projects with a common denominator of applicability in rural or small communities.

Since completing their portion of the project in May of this year, CoSERVE has compiled a report, "Utilizing Technology for Small Water Systems in Texas," that highlights water treatment technologies available for small water systems and

profiles existing small community systems that can serve as a guiding force for other rural systems.

This report provides an overview of the various water treatment technologies that can be used by small water systems. It also addresses the barriers to utilizing these technologies and lessons learned by small water system operators.

Highlights of the report:

- No single water treatment technology can solve each and every water quality problem.
- The primary water treatment technologies for small water systems are:
  - Disinfection
  - Membrane Filtration
  - Adsorption
  - Corrosion Control
  - Lime Softening
  - Activated Alumina
  - Ion Exchange
  - Coagulation-flocculation
  - Oxidation-filtration
  - Aeration

Visit the ORCA website for a copy of the complete report. Hard copies of this report are also available from ORCA.

## Standardized Training, Certification for Promotores(as), CHWs

### Texas First to Implement Program

By Cecilia Berrios, Texas Department of Health

They serve on the front lines of the public health field. Many times, they deal with the realities of limited resources and ever-present demands. They work in clinics, hospitals, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, public health departments, and university-sponsored activities. They provide services to community centers, in private homes and at times in rural work areas. They are known as community health workers (CHWs) and they address some of the most difficult public health problems of today.

A subset of CHWs is Promotores(as). These health workers are also referred to as lay health advocate, outreach coordinator, community health representative, and peer health promoter. A promotor(a) or community health worker is a person who, with or without compensation provides:

- Cultural mediation between communities and health and human service systems.
- Informal counseling and social support
- Culturally and linguistically appropriate health education
- Referral and follow-up services

For decades, this workforce has primarily been serving their communities as unpaid volunteers. Through a new initiative, CHWs now have a chance to be paid for their work. Through a certification program, applicants will receive training that recognizes eight core competencies meeting their basic skills CHW's need in order to work effectively in any setting. These core skills and knowledge competencies are: communication, interpersonal skills, service coordination, capacity building, advocacy, teaching, organization, and knowledge base skills.

The importance of the certification program is that it implements standard curriculum guidelines, which instill portable skills, ensure a common stock of knowledge, and guarantee certain basic skills. The certification program also assures uniformity and transferability of basic knowledge and skills regardless of where they CHW practice.

Texas is the first state in the country to implement a standardized training and certification program for promotores(as) or CHWs and, as such, is setting the pace for other states. By working hand-in-hand with the communities they serve, CHWs empower community residents to help themselves.

For more information on the certification program and the requirements, contact Cecilia Berrios, Public Health Promotion, Texas Department of Health, at 512-458-7405 or via e-mail at chw@tdh.state.tx.us.

### New Report Highlights Innovative Development Policies

The National Governors Association (NGA) recently published "Innovative State Policy Options to Promote Rural Economic Development." The report includes case studies of good rural development policies and programs and the states that support them.

For more information and a copy of the complete report, call NGA at 202-624-5300 or visit [www.nga.org](http://www.nga.org).

# Rural, Regional Offices of State Agencies

The following is a listing of regional offices of state agencies located in rural areas.

**ABILENE** (Taylor County)  
Texas Commission On Environmental Quality- (915) 698-9674

Texas Education Agency- (915) 675-8600  
Texas Department of Transportation- (915) 676-6800

**AMARILLO** (Potter County)  
Texas Department of Agriculture- (806) 358-7285  
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality- (806) 353-9251  
Texas Education Agency- (806) 677-5000  
Texas Department of Transportation- (806) 356-3200  
Texas Youth Commission- (806) 354-2134

**ATLANTA** (Cass County)  
Texas Department of Transportation- (903) 796-2851

**BEAUMONT** (Jefferson County)  
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality- (409) 898-3838  
Texas Education Agency- (409) 838-5555  
Texas Department of Transportation- (409) 892-7311  
Texas Youth Commission- (409) 724-6388

**BROWNSVILLE** (Cameron County)  
Texas Department of Agriculture- (956) 546-5135

Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs- (956) 544-0828

**BROWNWOOD** (Brown County)  
Texas Department of Transportation- (915) 646-2591  
Texas Youth Commission- (915) 641-4200

**BRYAN** (Brazos County)  
Texas Department of Transportation- (979) 778-2165  
Texas Youth Commission- (979) 779-1633

**CHILDRESS** (Childress County)  
Texas Department of Transportation- (940) 937-2571

**COLLEGE STATION** (Brazos County)  
Texas Department of Agriculture- (979) 458-4213

**CORPUS CHRISTI** (Nueces County)  
Texas Department of Agriculture- (361) 851-2745  
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality- (361) 825-3100  
Texas Education Agency- (361) 561-8400  
Texas Department of Transportation- (361) 808-2300  
Texas Youth Commission- (361) 692-1282  
Texas Youth Commission- (361) 857-0079

**CORSICANA** (Navarro County)  
Texas Youth Commission- (903) 872-4821

**CROCKETT** (Houston County)  
Texas Youth Commission- (936) 852-5000

**DEL RIO** (Val Verde County)  
Texas Department of Agriculture- (830) 775-1519

**EAGLE PASS** (Maverick County)  
Texas Department of Agriculture- (830) 773-2359  
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality- (830) 773-5059  
Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs- (830) 773-2279

Office of the Secretary of State- (830) 757-5774

**EDINBURG** (Hildago County)

Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs- (956) 383-3404

Office of the Secretary of State- (956) 287-8475

Office of the Secretary of State- (956) 383-2424

Texas Education Agency- (956) 984-6000

Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs- (956) 318-2619

Texas Youth Commission- (956) 380-0365

## EL PASO

Texas Department of Agriculture- (915) 859-3942  
Texas Department of Agriculture- (915) 859-3942  
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality- (915) 834-4949  
Office of the Secretary of State- (915) 834-5630

Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs- (915) 834-4928

Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs- (915) 543-3845

Texas Education Agency- (915) 780-1919

Texas Youth Commission- (915) 778-6407

Texas Youth Commission- (915) 858-2941

Texas Department of Health- (915) 834-7675

**GAINESVILLE** (Cooke County)  
Texas Youth Commission- (940) 665-0701

**GIDDINGS** (Lee County)  
Texas Department of Agriculture--Field/Greenhouse Testing- (979) 542-3691

Texas Youth Commission- (979) 542-3686

**HARLINGEN** (Cameron County)  
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality- (956) 425-6010  
Office of the Secretary of State- (956) 423-0761

Texas Youth Commission- (956) 423-6634

Texas Department of Health- (956) 423-0130

**HUNTSVILLE** (Walker County)  
Texas Education Agency- (936) 295-9161

**KILGORE** (Rusk County)  
Texas Education Agency- (903) 988-6700

**LAREDO** (Webb County)  
Texas Department of Agriculture- (956) 722-6307  
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality- (956) 791-6611  
Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs- (956) 523-4668

Office of the Secretary of State- (956) 523-4667  
Texas Department of Transportation- (956) 712-7400

**LUBBOCK** (Lubbock County)  
Texas Department of Agriculture- (806) 799-8555  
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality- (806) 796-7092  
Texas Education Agency- (806) 792-4000

Texas Department of Transportation- (806) 745-4411

Texas Youth Commission- (806) 763-1691

Texas Department of Health- (806) 744-3577

**LUFKIN** (Angelina County)  
Texas Department of Transportation- (936) 634-4433

**MARLIN** (Falls County)  
Texas Youth Commission- (254) 883-9221

**MART** (McLennon County)  
Texas Youth Commission- (254) 297-8200

**MIDLAND** (Midland County)  
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality- (915) 570-1359  
Texas Education Agency- (915) 563-2380  
Texas Youth Commission- (915) 570-7338

**MT. PLEASANT** (Titus County)  
Texas Education Agency- (903) 572-8551

**NEW WAVERLY** (Walker County)  
Texas Youth Commission- (936) 344-2363

**ODESSA** (Ector County)  
Texas Department of Transportation- (915) 332-0501

**PARIS** (Lamar County)  
Texas Department of Transportation- (903) 737-9300

**PERRYTON** (Ochiltree County)  
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality- (806) 435-8059

**PHARR** (Hildago County)  
Texas Department of Transportation- (956) 702-6100

**PYOTE** (Ward County)  
Texas Youth Commission- (915) 389-5555

**RIO GRANDE CITY** (Starr County)  
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality- (956) 425-6010  
Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs- (956) 487-2063

Office of the Secretary of State- (956) 488-8609

**ROANOKE** (Denton County)  
Texas Youth Commission- (817) 491-9387

**SAN ANGELO** (Tom Green County)  
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality- (915) 655-9479  
Texas Education Agency- (915) 658-6571  
Texas Department of Transportation- (915) 944-1501  
Texas Youth Commission- (210) 222-0359

**SAN JUAN** (Hildago County)  
Texas Department of Agriculture- (956) 787-8866-

**SAN SABA** (San Saba County)  
Texas Youth Commission- (956) 787-8866

**SHEFFIELD** (Pecos County)  
Texas Youth Commission- (915) 836-4624

**STEPHENVILLE** (Erath County)  
Texas Department of Agriculture- (254) 965-5097  
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality- (Confined Animal Feeding Operations)- (254) 965-5624

**TAYLOR** (Williamson County)  
Electric Reliability Council of Texas- (512) 248-3000

**TEMPLE** (Bell County)  
Texas Department of Health- (254) 778-6744

**TYLER** (Smith County)  
Texas Department of Agriculture- (903) 939-3999  
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality- (903) 535-5100  
Texas Department of Transportation- (903) 510-9100  
Texas Youth Commission- (903) 597-0628  
Texas Department of Health- (903) 595-3585

**VERNON** (Wilbarger County)  
Texas Youth Commission- (940) 552-9347

**VICTORIA** (Victoria County)  
Texas Education Agency- (361) 573-0731

**WACO** (McLennon County)  
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality- (254) 751-0335  
Texas Education Agency- (254) 297-1212  
Texas Department of Transportation- District (254) 867-2700  
Texas Youth Commission- (254) 755-7052

**WESLACO** (Hildago County)  
Texas Commission on the Arts- (956) 968-4342

**WICHITA FALLS** (Wichita County)  
Texas Education Agency- (940) 322-6928,  
Texas Department of Transportation- (940) 720-7700

**YOAKUM** (Lavaca County)  
Texas Department of Transportation- (361) 293-4300

For complete agency contact information, visit ORCA's website.



## DPS Implements New Program to Recover Stolen Equipment

According to the Texas Crime Information Center, in 2000, 784 pieces of commercial equipment and 801 pieces of farm equipment were stolen. In 2001, 788 pieces of commercial equipment and 1,063 pieces of farm equipment were stolen.

This includes such items as bulldozers, generators, air compressors, construction equipment, and farming equipment. Needless to say, theft of heavy equipment is on the rise.

In 2003, the Texas Department of Public Safety implemented a program called the Texas Recovery and Identification Program (TRIP) that assists in the recovery of heavy equipment.

This program is designed for owners of both commercial and farm grade equipment to have specific information regarding their property indexed into the Texas Crime Information Center (TCIC) database. Decals placed on registered equipment will help law enforcement personnel identify and contact the owners of stolen equipment using the Texas Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (TLETS).

For more information about this program, call 1-888-447-5933 or send an e-mail to [TRIP@txdps.state.tx.us](mailto:TRIP@txdps.state.tx.us).

Registration for this program is free and you may register online at <http://records.txdps.state.tx.us/mvt/>.

## Rural Texans Encouraged to Speak Up; Shape Agency

By Jill McFarren, ORCA

ORCA's nine-member governing body, which guides the development of the agency and defines its policy and philosophy, will meet three more times during the rest of 2003. Meetings are set to take place in Brenham (Washington County) in August; in Austin (Travis County) in October, and Kountz (Hardin County) in December.

The majority of meetings are intentionally held in locations outside of Austin to encourage rural Texans to participate in the committee's processes. Public comments are always welcome at the meetings.

"It's important that the leadership of the agency reach out to rural Texans on their home turf," explains William Jeter, ORCA's Executive Committee Chair. "ORCA was designed to administer programs and services that encourage rural communities to develop their own solutions to their unique needs with guidance and limited financial assistance from this new agency. We can only be successful in reaching this goal by making ourselves available to rural Texans and having them tell us what they need. Sometimes the best way to do that is to go to rural communities and visit with Texans in their own backyard."

By holding executive committee meetings in rural communities, the agency hopes to also provide an opportunity for everyone to better understand rural needs and issues, which in turn helps the agency's leadership guide the administration of ORCA's programs and services.

ORCA has a lot of work to do. The agency's overall goal is to help the state's 3.2 million rural Texans address their important issues. That's a big job when considering that Texas' rural population alone is greater than the individual populations of 25 other states. But ORCA won't be tackling rural Texas concerns on its own.

"ORCA was created to assist rural Texans with strengthening their own communities," said Robt. J. "Sam" Tessen, ORCA's Executive Director. "ORCA's job is to facilitate the resources and partnerships between individuals and groups that come together on local, regional, and state levels to make needed changes in their rural communities. We can achieve the successes that we're all looking for only by working together and contributing our individual services."

For more information about ORCA's executive committee members or meetings, visit ORCA's website.

### HealthFind 2003

Oh, the places you can go... and the difference you can make!

Don't Miss Rural Texas' Annual "Healthcare Job Fair"!

Omni Austin Hotel Southpark  
4140 Governor's Row  
Austin, Texas

Saturday Sept. 6, 2003  
and  
Sunday Sept. 7, 2003

For more information on HealthFind 2003, contact Robin Houston toll free at ORCA or e-mail [rhouston@orca.state.tx.us](mailto:rhouston@orca.state.tx.us).

<b>What</b>	Health care professionals and rural Texas community representatives meet to share job opportunities and practitioner availability.
<b>Why</b>	Reduce your financial barriers often associated with recruitment. Visit representatives from several rural Texas communities.
<b>Who</b>	All healthcare professions and rural Texas communities interested in recruiting health care professionals.
<b>Get on it!</b>	Registration deadline is August 15, 2003.

Don't miss this great opportunity to launch recruit healthcare professionals to your community!

## The Future of Rural Texas

Insert your thoughts, insights, and comments here!

Rural Texas is changing with each passing day and the sooner we recognize these changes, the better we will be in preparing for what challenges lie ahead. The Future of Rural Texas lies in the hands of you and your rural community. How will you address these challenges you will be faced with? How will your community retain the pieces of rural life that make it so unique, while at the same time expand the community's economic opportunities?

ORCA's door is always open for your comments and suggestions regarding the agency, or rural issues in general. Give us your thoughts, insights, and comments on what you think is the Future of Rural Texas. You can either mail or e-mail your submissions of 100-200 words to ORCA.

### Texas Facts Official State Symbols

Nickname:	The Lone Star State
Food:	Chili
Tree:	Pecan
Insect:	Monarch Butterfly
Folk Dance:	Square Dance
Motto:	Friendship
Song:	"Texas, Our Texas"
Bird:	Mockingbird
Sport:	Rodeo
Fiber & Fabric:	Cotton

Source: Ronnie S. Hilliard, <http://gotexas.about.com>

## Innovative Rural Texas Solutions, Successes

Being economically successful is one of the largest goals for rural Texas communities today. Below are a few success stories from communities around Texas that are building strong, viable communities with innovative solutions.

The city manager of **Yorktown** in Dewitt County, obtained a grant from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to renovate and remodel an old school building into an indoor recreation area using prison labor from the Stevens unit in Cuero. For more information, contact Milton Ledwig at 361-564-2611, PO Box 605, Yorktown, TX 78164.

The **Johnson City** Chamber of Commerce in Blanco County has purchased an FM radio station, which began transmitting in late August 2002. The purpose of the station is to transmit tourist and community information.

The Chamber of Commerce also put together a "Texas Deer Hunt for 2" vacation package, including accommodations, hunting, meals, and more to auction on E-bay to raise funds for their organization. Many parts of the package were donated by local businesses. For additional information, contact Larry Milner at 830-868-9270, PO Box 485, Johnson City, TX 78636.

**Shackelford County** Community Resource Center is the county's "one stop shop" for health, social, and human services. The center coordinates with 26 agencies to provide, among other services: parenting education, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), case management, health screening, medical and dental, immunization clinic, translation, emergency assistance, mental and retardation, counseling, senior citizen programs, summer day camp and work program for at-risk youth, General Education Development (GED), and adult literacy classes.

As a successful program, the Center applied for and was awarded a Texas Rural Best Award of \$10,000 from Texas Rural Communities, Inc., in 2001.

Contact Susan Jones, BSN, RN at 915-762-2447, 725 Pate Street, Albany, TX 76430 about the project. Contact Sandra Tenorio at 512-219-0468, Texas Rural Communities, Inc., 12401 Hymeadow Drive, Bldg 1, Suite 1-B, Austin, TX 78750 about the award.

The Dr. Eugene Clark Library in **Lockhart** is Texas' oldest continuously operating library and is the larger of only two public libraries in Caldwell County. LOCK.NET (Lockhart Neighborhood Electronic Training) is a library outreach program that provides computers, printers, one-on-one training, and Internet connectivity in two disadvantaged neighborhoods in Lockhart.

Computer and Internet training provided in both Spanish and English at neighborhood churches and the local Head Start facility is free to any resident. Library staff travels to the neighborhood sites and offers seven weekly computer-training sessions of four hours each. Several times a year in-depth training is given in Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel, and other software applications.

Contact RoseAlita Laurell at 512-398-3223, PO Box 209, Lockhart, TX 78644 about the project. Contact Sandra Tenorio at 512-219-0468, Texas Rural Communities, Inc., 12401 Hymeadow Drive, Bldg 1, Suite 1-B, Austin, TX 78750 about the award.

**"Where in Rural Texas are You?"**  
Answer to hints on page 3: **Dumas, Texas**  
(Moore County)

## Strategies to Revitalize Rural Communities:

### *Making Communities Desirable Places to Live*

For rural communities to thrive, they must be places that people want to live.

Making rural communities desirable places to live is not the whole answer. If there is no economic opportunity in an area, young families can't live there no matter how much they might want to. However, economic opportunity is more likely to be created in attractive places to live because they draw young families and entrepreneurs who start new farms and businesses and revitalize existing enterprises. In recent decades, rural communities with natural amenities to draw people – lakes, mountains, rivers, or climate – have grown.

Most farm and ranch communities don't have mountains or lakes. They aren't likely to become the next tourist-filled Aspen, and most of us wouldn't want that. But each of our communities has assets, strengths, and opportunities we can build on to draw people – native sons and daughters back to raise their families and others seeking a rural life style. Those assets range from natural amenities, to strong schools, to friendly neighbors. The best place to start is with existing strengths.

**Strong Small Schools.** Small schools have long been a drawing card for rural communities. Communities that make a commitment to provide a quality education in small, community-based schools and invest in them will always have a powerful advantage in attracting young families with children. But small rural schools are facing increasing financial pressures and are under growing political pressure to consolidate.

Only local people in each community are in a position to make decisions about whether and when to consolidate schools or override levy limits to increase school funding to enhance educational quality. But the contribution of strong, small, community-based schools to the viability of the community should be a strong consideration.

State policymakers should not blindly force school consolidation that undermines both education and communities under the misguided assumption that bigger is better and more efficient in education. The research indicates that small schools have the best educational outcomes for most children.

There are opportunities for communities to work together in ways that enable them to keep and strengthen their schools while holding the line on costs. Some districts are sharing a superintendent. That spreads the costs of the highest salary and perhaps enables each district to gain the advantage of a more talented leader than they could each hire individually.

Others are sharing teachers and offering joint classes by distance education or by transporting upper-level students between communities to enable them to offer advanced courses with low enrollments at a reasonable cost.

**A Sense of Community.** Many people long to live in a community where people know and care about each other. It's not surprising. Surveys on happiness and life satisfaction suggest the factor most strongly correlated with satisfaction is regular contact with a network of friends – community. It's more strongly correlated with satisfaction than income.

Communities that create spaces for people to meet and interact and work at being friendly are more likely to attract and keep families and businesses than those that don't. That is especially true of native sons and daughters who have experience living in the community. They are more likely to return home to raise their families if they experienced a strong sense of community and supportive interaction as children.

**Social Capital.** When *Christian Science Monitor* reporter *Laurent Beltsie* was interviewed on *National Public Radio*

about his series, "Alone on the Range," he was asked whether he thought the rural communities of the Heartland could turn it around and survive. He said that while all the trends were against them, he would not count them out because he was so impressed by the people he had interviewed – their spirit, their entrepreneurial bent, and devotion to working together to make their community work.

That's social capital.

Communities that have it are more attractive places to live because things work better. People work together to solve problems and make things better. Communities can enhance their future by establishing a culture of working together to solve problems, launch new initiatives, and make the community a better place to live.

Young people and families must be involved in the community. If we want them, we need to give them some influence in making the community a place they want to live and raise their families.

They have unique needs. They want swimming pools, summer baseball, and other programs to enrich the lives of their children. Perhaps they want better Internet service or have ideas for making the community more attractive by restoring historic buildings and character. Communities that allow them to lead will more likely keep them and draw more like them.

**High Speed Internet Service.** It's a necessity. Young people see it as a contributor to quality of life. It enables them to connect to the outside world in a way that brings cultural and other amenities of distant places closer.

**Access to Nature and a Quality Environment.** In the future, access to uncrowded natural land will be increasingly hard to come by, and it will be an increasingly valuable asset for communities. Communities that offer it will have a leg up in attracting families to start businesses and drive revitalization.

Access to a quality environment also offers a base for tourism-related businesses like bed and breakfasts and guest ranches that offer a weekend away within an easy commute of population centers. This is one of the factors where farm and ranch communities have a natural advantage. They are surrounded by land. But often, there is little public access and in some areas, almost every acre is cultivated.

New public policies can facilitate development of natural amenities. The Conservation Partnerships and Cooperation Program created by the farm bill authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to undertake conservation projects in partnership with communities and make needed adjustments in conservation program rules to make the projects work.

Finally, the growing value of a quality environment in community revitalization should give pause to those who would weaken the authority of local zoning boards to control the location of giant livestock facilities.

The economic development benefits of mega-livestock operations are often less than anticipated and outweighed by the negative influence of such facilities on the decisions of families and businesses about whether to locate in the community.

People who want to start businesses, farms, and ranches prefer to do it in good places to live. Making our communities better places to live is one of the critical factors in enhancing their future.

Adapted from an article by Chuck Hassebrook in the June 2003 *Center for Rural Affairs'* newsletter.

For more information, call at 402-846-5428, extension 28 or visit the Center for Rural Affairs' website at [www.cfra.org](http://www.cfra.org).



# ORCA's Program Activities

## Rural Texas Communities Awarded \$50.6 Million

ORCA awards 206 grants for development projects statewide

By Jill McFarren, ORCA

ORCA awarded 206 grants totaling \$50,691,368 to rural cities and counties across the state for infrastructure, public facility improvements, housing unit rehabilitation and planning and capacity building activities. The awards are the result of biennial competitions for the Community Development, Housing Rehabilitation, and Planning and Capacity Building Funds, which are part of the agency's Texas Community Development Program (TCDP).

"These funds provide for the basic necessities that many of us take for granted," said Robt. J. "Sam" Tessen, MS, ORCA's Executive Director. "The monies are vital to rural Texas communities with limited funding options to cover infrastructure needs. ORCA's mission is to assist these communities in the most efficient, cost-effective means possible for the benefit of all Texans, and these federally funded grants help us to help rural communities provide for basic human needs."

"TCDP funds are development tools for neighborhood stabilization, revitalization, economic development, and other critical community development needs," explains Oralia Cardenas, Director of ORCA's TCDP. "The program brings together residents, local officials, community development corporations, and community and business leaders in partnerships that benefit local communities."

The **Community Development Fund** is currently distributed on a biennial basis through annual competitions held in each of the twenty-four state planning regions. The Community Development Fund principally addresses water, sewer, and housing projects that benefit low-income persons. A total of 179 awards totaling \$48,386,918 were granted from this fund.

The **Housing Rehabilitation Fund** is distributed on a biennial basis for projects that support the rehabilitation of existing owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing units. The selection scoring system encourages activities that will make existing housing units accessible to persons with disabilities. A total of 6 awards totaling \$1,500,000 were granted from this fund.

Funding from the **Planning and Capacity Building Fund** is available on a competitive basis for planning activities that assess local needs, develop strategies to address local needs, build or improve local capacity, or that address other needed local planning elements. The planning process undertaken with these funds should result in an improved local capacity to identify long and short term needs and to develop implementable strategies to address the identified community needs. Emphasis is placed on public works and housing assistance planning. A total of 21 awards totaling \$804,450 were granted from this fund.

For a complete listing of grantees and awarded projects, visit the agency's website at [www.orca.state.tx.us](http://www.orca.state.tx.us).

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is the funding source for TCDP, which administers the nation's largest Community Development Block Grant Program.

## Rural Texas Hospitals Receive \$959,667 from ORCA

By Jill McFarren, ORCA

In late April 2003, ORCA awarded \$959,667 to 21 rural hospitals throughout the state. The grants, made through the agency's Capital Improvement Loan Fund, are to be used for making capital improvements to existing health facilities, constructing new health facilities, or purchasing capital equipment, including information systems hardware and software.

The purpose of the Fund is to improve the health services and healthcare infrastructure of Texas' rural communities and is designed to assist rural facilities that do not have many funding source options or are often overlooked in other grant awards.

### Awardees include:

Hospital	City	Funded Amount	Project
Baylor County Hospital District	Seymour	\$50,000	Remove old R/F X-Ray machine & install new system
Bayside Community Hospital	Anahuac	\$50,000	Ultrasound
Brownfield Regional Medical Center	Brownfield	\$42,102	X-ray Equipment
Castro County Hospital District	Dimmitt	\$50,000	Purchase EKG; rewiring hospital for MIS system;
Cochran Memorial Hospital	Morton	\$45,000	Chemistry Analyzer & Portable X-ray Machine
Crosbyton Clinic Hospital	Crosbyton	\$50,000	Purchase Radiology/Fluoroscopy Table
Culberson Hospital District	Van Horn	\$50,000	Life Safety Code Violations
Dimmit County Memorial Hospital	Carrizo Springs	\$50,000	Bone Mineral Analysis System; Mobile X-ray System
ETMC - Carthage	Carthage	\$45,000	Patient monitoring equipment in ICU
Fisher County Hospital District	Rotan	\$41,625	Immunochemistry system for lab
Linden Municipal Hospital	Linden	\$50,000	Purchase New CAT Scanner
Medina Community Hospital	Hondo	\$50,000	Electrical System Upgrade; Life Safety
Muleshoe Area Hospital Districts	Muleshoe	\$40,454	Replace telemetry equipment
North Runnels Hospital	Winters	\$50,000	Telemetry system; fire alarm system replacement
Pecos County Memorial Hospital	Fort Stockton	\$45,000	Gas Analyzer, Baby Beds & Computer Equipment
Permian Regional Medical Center	Andrews	\$34,780	Two Active Electrode Monitoring Systems
Shamrock General Hospital	Shamrock	\$42,618	Telemetry Units for inpatients w/central review station
Stamford Memorial Hospital	Stamford	\$50,000	Sprinkler system for life-safety code violations
Ward Memorial Hospital	Monahans	\$41,137	Mobile Radiographic System
Wise Regional Health System	Decatur	\$31,950	TEE Probe (detects heart problems in high risk patients)
Yoakum Community Hospital	Yoakum	\$50,000	Bone Density System; Convert Fluoroscopy system

Funds from the program are available to eligible rural health facilities for projects of up to \$50,000, and require a 10 percent match. Eligible applicants include rural public and nonprofit hospitals located in counties of less than 150,000 Texans

For more information about the Capital Improvement Loan Fund, contact ORCA or visit the agency's website.

## Federally-Funded Projects Provide for Basic Human Needs to Rural Communities

The following is a sampling of rural projects funded by ORCA's Texas Community Development Program (TCDP).

### Community volunteers to provide labor for rural water projects

Lamar County was awarded with a \$208,000 Texas Small Towns Environment Program (Texas STEP) grant and with help from volunteers from the communities of Pinhook, Marvin, Jennings and Clardy they will upgrade a water main line and provide first time water service in the area. Volunteers will install approximately 23,600 linear feet (4.5 miles) of water line, bore and encasement, 15 new water service connections and associated property rights of way. The project will benefit 539 persons of whom 322 or 59.73 percent are of low- to moderate-income. The first time service connections will benefit 27 persons.

STEP provides funding options for equipment, expertise, and technical assistance to rural communities experiencing water and wastewater problems. Communities and counties working with Texas STEP have saved more than 50 percent on retail construction costs while maximizing the number of citizens each project benefits. Residents provide a certain percentage of the labor and receive direction, technical expertise, and specialized equipment from ORCA and contract engineering crews.

### Kilgore provides infrastructure to new single-family homes

The city of Kilgore (Gregg County) recently completed its TCDP Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) contract. The \$168,126 grant provided for the infrastructure to support 22 new single-family homes. A total of 18 homes were sold to low- to moderate- income families.

HIF grants are available on a direct award basis for the infrastructure development to support the construction of affordable single family and multifamily low- to moderate-income housing. Although the grants may not be used for the actual construction costs of new housing, eligible activities include:

- Public facilities improvements supporting the development of the low to moderate income housing;
- Engineering costs associated with the public facilities improvements; and
- Administrative costs associated with the site clearance, site improvements, and public facilities improvements.

Among other criteria, all TCDP program-funded projects must benefit 51 percent low- to moderate-income Texans. Contact ORCA for more information on any of these projects or programs.



# ORCA Satisfaction Survey

The Office of Rural Community Affairs was designed specifically to serve rural Texans. To meet this charge, we need input from our constituents to further ORCA's development and ensure that we are meeting our constituents' needs.

You are invited to provide feedback to ORCA using this form. Simply circle the most appropriate response for each statement using "1" as the most agreeable statement and "5" being the least agreeable statement.

Please circle the most appropriate response for each statement.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral or Unsure      Disagree      Strongly Disagree      Not Applicable

**Facilities**

1 The location of the ORCA office is convenient (e.g., parking public transportation, distance). 1 2 3 4 5 6

**Staff**

2 ORCA staff members are knowledgeable and able to answer my questions. 1 2 3 4 5 6

3 ORCA staff members are courteous. 1 2 3 4 5 6

**Communications**

4 I am given clear explanations about funding opportunities and services available to me. 1 2 3 4 5 6

5 I am given the information I need to apply for funding or access services. 1 2 3 4 5 6

**Internet Site**

6 I have access to the Internet at home. 1 2 3 4 5 6

7 I have access to the Internet at work. 1 2 3 4 5 6

8 I access the website for information before I contact ORCA directly. 1 2 3 4 5 6

9 The website is easy to use and well organized. 1 2 3 4 5 6

10 The website contains clear and accurate information on events, services, and contact information. 1 2 3 4 5 6

**Complaint Handling Process**

10 I know how to make a complaint regarding services received from ORCA or an ORCA sub-grantee. 1 2 3 4 5 6

11 If I complained, I believe it would be addressed in a reasonable manner. 1 2 3 4 5 6

**Timeliness**

12 My telephone, letter or e-mail inquiries are answered in a reasonable amount of time. 1 2 3 4 5 6

**Printed Materials**

13 Printed materials from ORCA provide thorough and accurate information. 1 2 3 4 5 6

14 Printed materials from ORCA are clear and understandable. 1 2 3 4 5 6

**Program Application Processes**

15 I would like the option to file application(s) for ORCA programs electronically. 1 2 3 4 5 6

**General / Overall**

16 Overall, I am satisfied with my experience with ORCA. 1 2 3 4 5 6

**Annual Rural Texas Summit (ORCA's annual rural-focused conference)**

17 I prefer to attend Summits that include *interactive discussions*. 1 2 3 4 5 6

18 I prefer to attend Summits that include *workshop sessions*. 1 2 3 4 5 6

19 Every Summit should be held in a rural community. 1 2 3 4 5 6

**Quarterly Newsletter: The Rural Texan**

20 I prefer to receive "The Rural Texan" in hard copy. 1 2 3 4 5 6

21 I would like to receive "The Rural Texan" by email. 1 2 3 4 5 6

22 I typically share my copy of "The Rural Texan" with my colleagues. 1 2 3 4 5 6

23 I like to read more information about *innovative rural solutions*. 1 2 3 4 5 6

24 I like to read more information about *resources available to rural areas*. 1 2 3 4 5 6

25 I like to read more information about *ORCA's programs, services and activities*. 1 2 3 4 5 6

Use this space to share any additional comments, suggestions or ideas about ORCA's programs, services, activities, and/or any rural issues of concern.

My zip code is: \_\_\_\_\_

The following best describes my role in the rural Texas arena:

- \_\_\_ Elected Official
- \_\_\_ For Profit organization representative
- \_\_\_ Government employee (i.e., federal, state, or local)
- \_\_\_ Non-Profit organization representative
- \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for your time!*  
**Please return this survey to:**  
**OFFICE OF RURAL COMMUNITY AFFAIRS**  
**PO Box 12877**  
**Austin, TX 78711**