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The Rural Texan

Summer 2002

Office of Rural Community Affairs

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Welcome to ORCA and "The Rural Texan"!

By Ann Dewees, ORCA

Welcome to Texas' newest state agency, the Office of Rural Community Affairs (ORCA). Created in 2001 by the 77th Texas Legislature, ORCA was designed to serve as a focal agency for the state's community development, economic development, and healthcare programs that target the rural areas of Texas.

ORCA has opened its doors to rural Texans, inviting the public to contribute comments and suggestions about the agency and rural issues in general. The move marks an historic step in the development of the new state agency. "We have an obligation to serve the public in the most effective way by building an agency that meets the needs of its constituency," explains Robt. J. "Sam" Tessen, MS, ORCA's Executive Director. "The best way to do that is to ask the public what they want their agency to be and do and how they want the agency to accomplish those things. Essentially, we are asking the public to participate in their new agency's development. Then, we must conscientiously follow through and do what our constituents need."

Support for the creation of the new agency in an era of "no growth government" was gained by pulling existing rural-focused programs and services from various state agencies and bringing them together under the single administrative umbrella of the new agency. The Community Development and Outreach and Training Services programs came to ORCA from the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, while the new agency's Rural Health Unit was formerly the Center For Rural Health Initiatives. (For a description of the programs and services administered by these units, see page 16.)

To better reach all of rural Texas, a new newsletter was required, and "The Rural Texan" was born.

As the agency's quarterly newsletter, "The Rural Texan" presents information on ORCA's programs and services and offers tips and contacts for assistance and funding from ORCA and other state and federal, private and public sources.

The legislature designed ORCA with the intention that the new agency would be the door to Texas government for rural citizens. ORCA's goal is to provide a sustained and comprehensive focus on rural issues, needs, and concerns. The following are the agency's objectives.

Perform oversight functions to:

- ◆ Ensure rural programs are being implemented and program budgets distributed to rural areas;
- ◆ Develop rural policy initiatives and monitor other agencies' policies to ensure they are not detrimental to rural areas; and
- ◆ Facilitate communication between all state agencies on rural issues.

(Continued on page 3)



From the Desk Of . . .

The Executive Committee Chair

To Our Rural Friends and Neighbors

As many of you know by now, the last legislature created the Office of Rural Community Affairs with the passage of House Bill (HB) 7. The Governor signed this bill into law in June 2001, and the executive committee was sworn into office on October 31, 2001.

Since then, we have hired an Executive Director and transferred the assets and personnel specified under the Act. Essentially, the administration of the programs and services offered by the Center for Rural Health Initiatives and the Community Development Block Grant and Local Government Services programs from the Texas Department Housing and Community Affairs were transferred to ORCA.

But our initiative is much larger than these programs alone. Our initiative, described in HB7, is to develop a rural policy for the state of Texas. This policy will help our rural communities find opportunities that enable them to reverse declines in populations and their resultant tax bases, which often lead to an increase in the poverty level.

We are well on the road to that goal. This committee is dedicated to finding new solutions to old, persistent problems. We try to see things as they could be, rather than to accept things as they exist. We look for solutions that are not band-aids to a wound but, rather, the cure for a chronic illness. ORCA is dedicated to identifying solutions to specific issues for specific communities, rather than attempting to find one solution to address the many issues in rural Texas. We seek to find unique opportunities for unique issues.

To that end, we will find ways to use existing funds in a manner that helps those in the most severe need. At the same time, our focus is on helping each of our rural communities develop solutions based upon their long-range needs, objectives, and strategies, and developing new economic activity that will bring growth and reverse decline.

We want to make a difference. We want your input. We want to work together with you and share our expertise, and that of the many dedicated state employees who serve our state, with you and your neighbors, so that together we can open the doors of opportunity. Ours is the door to Texas government for rural Texans and we encourage you to use it.

On behalf of ORCA, we look forward to working with you.

William M. Jeter III
Chair, Executive Committee

The Rural Texan is a free publication of the Office of Rural Community Affairs (ORCA).

It is produced quarterly to inform the public about agency programs and services, and is written and designed in-house by agency staff.

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To subscribe to **The Rural Texan**, or for more information about ORCA, contact:

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The Executive Director

On the Square in Rural Texas

What is ORCA? It seems that it means different things to different people. We know it is all about rural communities and the Texans that live there. It is about community development, rural health, economic development, training for rural leaders, community infrastructure, and advocacy for rural issues and needs. But most of all, it is about the future of our rural communities. It is about rural citizens and their leaders working together, with a focused voice in Austin, all helping to make the community's future not only possible but successful. It is going to mean more things to more rural folks as time goes on.

Welcome to the first issue of "The Rural Texan" newsletter! With the advent of the new Office of Rural Community Affairs (ORCA) of the State of Texas, it seemed only right that a newsletter should reflect the new agency and all it offers. So the new newsletter is born. It will focus on all areas of our new agency and reflect all we do and represent. The name just seems appropriate.

This will be your newsletter, designed to share news of your rural agency, including information about grants and services available to rural communities and organizations, resources that may be of interest or assistance to rural constituents, and news of rural issues and new ideas. It will be a significant way for the agency to reach out to you, our constituents and rural health advocates.

But it is also critical that this be a two-way relationship. It is important that you share your ideas and suggestions. We want to ensure that our agency really reflects our rural roots and all the real-life attitudes and perspectives that come with a rural way of thinking. We encourage you to be a partner in your rural agency. Help determine what the agency does and becomes. Together, we can do this right.

Meanwhile, the development of your new rural Texas agency continues. The focus in the first months has been to continue the administration of the programs that came into the new agency without interruption. Stability and continuity have been the watchwords.

We are now in the second phase—that of exploring the broader implications of those programs and projects at the local community level. Be it a water connection project or a grant to a rural hospital, each has implications for the local community beyond just the specific project. Learning what those implications are is critical to the next phase—reviewing ORCA's programs and services for possible revisions to ensure they meet the broad spectrum of needs facing our rural communities.

We at ORCA look forward to working with you. Together, we can turn the Passion for Rural into Action!!!

Robt. J. "Sam" Tessen, MS
Executive Director

ORCA Executive Committee

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What You Need to Know About . . .

Rural Fire Prevention Districts and Emergency Service Districts

By Charlie Stone. ORCA

ORCA is committed to serving the fire protection and emergency medical service needs of the citizens of rural and frontier Texas.

The agency's Outreach and Training Services Unit and the agency's Emergency Medical Services section of the Rural Health Unit are working together to assist every rural and frontier area interested in learning more about establishing either a Rural Fire Prevention District (RFPD) or an Emergency Services District (ESD) to address local needs.

Both RFPDs and ESDs are tools that may provide the necessary revenue to fire departments and EMS to continue to meet the growing demands for their services.

Both RFPDs and ESDs:

- are political subdivisions of the state;
- serve to protect life and property from fire and to conserve natural and human resources;
- support themselves through an ad valorem tax on properties within the district; and
- are created through a petition presented to the local commissioners' court.

ORCA encourages anyone interested in creating an RFPD or an ESD to work closely with local the commissioners' court and other elected officials before formally beginning the petition process.

If the commissioners' court receives a qualifying petition to create an RFPD or an ESD, they may call an election.

If the voters choose to establish an RFPD or ESD, the commissioners' court appoints five residents of the district to serve as RFPD or ESD commissioners. RFPD and ESD commissioners have the power to establish a budget, purchase or lease equipment and property, sign contracts, hire employees and set a tax rate not to exceed three cents for an RFPD or 10 cents for an ESD per one hundred dollar valuation of real property located within the district.

There are approximately 137 RFPD's currently operating in Texas, with more and more communities interested in establishing a district for their area.

There are currently 53 ESD's operating in Texas. An existing RFPD may convert itself to an ESD if the voters approve the conversion and agree to the increased tax rate. More than fifteen percent of Texas total population lives in areas designated as rural. (2002-2003 Texas Almanac, Mary G. Ramos, Editor)



Guest Column

Texas to Benefit From New Office of Rural Community Affairs

By Lieutenant Governor Bill Ratliff

Anyone who travels the urban edges of the I-35 corridor that bisects Texas from the Red River to the Rio Grande might have trouble believing it, but a large number of Texans still live, work and thrive in rural areas of our state. In fact, at 3.35 million, our rural population is larger than half of the states in the nation.

While rural areas and small towns in Texas have always faced special circumstances to keep them vibrant, the ever-quicken pace of the 21st Century has added to a growing list of challenges that must be met.

Access to health care and education, transportation, jobs and water—there is no end to real issues rural Texans must address to support their way of life and make it an attractive and viable option for others. That is why I was so pleased to support the creation of the new Office of Rural and Community Affairs (ORCA) in the last session of the Texas Legislature.

ORCA was formed in 2001 to find ways to improve the quality of life in Texas' smaller communities and develop a rural policy for our state. It is designed to serve as a conduit between state agencies and local leaders and will study the most beneficial and cost-effective ways to preserve and improve rural communities. ORCA also has assumed the duties of the Center for Rural Health Initiatives and the responsibility for administering the Community Development Block Grant program from the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs. Taxpayers and state budget writers alike are pleased it will operate at no additional cost to the state.

ORCA is governed by a nine-member board appointed by the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the House. By law, two-thirds of its board members must have a strong commitment to rural interests based on their personal history. The board has broad authority to appoint advisory committees of private citizens and representatives in state and local government to help it perform its duties and it may accept gifts, grants and donations to fund its activities. ORCA will submit a biennial report to state lawmakers regarding its programs and offer recommendations on rural matters. It is subject to the state's Sunset Act, and like other state agencies, boards and commissions, it will be reviewed regularly by the legislature to judge its effectiveness.

I am glad Texas has joined at least 10 other states—including California, New York, Pennsylvania, and Illinois—in creating an office specifically designed to address rural affairs. New strategies and new technologies can build new opportunities for one and all. ORCA will provide Texans with a valuable service by developing a much-needed rural policy that can address issues that have been overlooked by a patchwork of state and federal programs.

Rural Texas is much more than barbed wire, plowed fields, and pasture land. It is the foundation this state was built on and it is just as important to our future as it is to our past.

(Welcome, continued from page 1)

Coordinate activities with the Texas Legislature by:

- ♦ Serving as a resource to the Legislature, the Rural Caucus of the Texas Legislature, and various committees of the legislature; and
- ♦ Developing new ideas for rural legislation and suggestions for improving current legislation.

Maintain rural clearinghouse functions in order to:

- ♦ Be a resource with information on rural programs, grants, services, etc.;
- ♦ Coordinate delivery of rural resources at the state and local level; and
- ♦ Collect input from rural areas on addressing local needs and improving delivery of state and local resources.

Perform agency outreach by:

- ♦ Responding to requests for assistance from local officials and organizations; and
- ♦ Initiating contact with local entities to increase awareness of and encourage participation in programs.

Welcome to *your* Office of Rural Community Affairs—your door to Texas government!



Meet Key ORCA Staff

ROBT. J. "SAM" TESSEN, MS, Executive Director, once served as the executive director of the Center for Rural Health Initiatives, now ORCA's Rural Health Unit. Before accepting the ORCA post, Tessen was executive director of the state's Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund (TIF) Board. He holds Bachelor of Arts degrees in Psychology and Political Science from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, and is a Licensed Professional Counselor and a Licensed Nursing Facility Administrator. Tessen earned a Master of Science degree in Psychology, with a focus on Community Mental Health, from Western Illinois University.

ROBERT "BOB" BEISSNER, Manager, Information Systems Unit, is the computer network administrator for the agency. He previously held the position of Operations Manager at the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs. He previously served as Network Technician for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. He has two associate degrees from Austin Community College in Computer Science and Management Information Systems. He is also a Certified Software Manager and Certified AIX Administrator.

ORALIA CARDENAS, Director, Program Compliance and Audit Unit, has been involved in community and economic development for over 20 years. In 1979, she began working with the CDBG Program in Edinburg, Texas. In 1988, she joined the Texas Community Development Program, administered by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, where she managed the monitoring section for the CDBG and HOME Investment Partnership programs. She has a BA in Psychology from Pan American University in Edinburg.

MIKE EASLEY, Director, Rural Health Unit, was executive director of the Center for Rural Health Initiatives before it became part of ORCA. Mr. Easley has over 25 years experience managing health and human services programs in state agencies as well as private for-profit and not-for-profit organizations. He holds a Master of Public Administration degree from Southwest Texas State University.

J. RANDEL "JERRY" HILL, General Counsel, has a Juris Doctorate (JD) degree from St. Mary's University and a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) degree from Southwest Texas State University. He has served as the General Counsel to the Texas Workforce

Commission, General Counsel to the Board of Public Accountancy, and Director of Mining for the Texas Railroad Commission. He has had five gubernatorial appointments to committees overseeing state and national regulatory activities.

SANDY MAURO, Director, Texas Community Development Program (TCDP), has been with the State Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Program for the past 18 years. Currently an \$88 million per year program, the TCDP administers the nation's largest Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. As director of TCDP, Sandy administers the selection and management of grant awards. She is a graduate of Sam Houston State University with graduate work at Sam Houston State University and Abilene Christian University at Dallas.

JILL MCFARREN, Team Leader, Communications Unit, has a BA degree in Communications and Design from California State University at Chico. She has over 10 years of experience in the marketing, communications, design, and media relations arenas in the medical, rural health, and housing fields. She has worked in the Texas state government environment for four years, having previously been employed with the Center for Rural Health Initiatives and the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs.

BOB MCGLASSON, Chief Financial Officer, directs the preparation of the agency's Annual Operating Budget, Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR), Monthly Expenditure Reports to the ORCA Executive Committee, and other agency financial issues. Bob has 14 years experience in the areas of finance and budget with the State of Texas. He has a BBA from The University of Texas at Arlington and an MBA from Southwest Texas State University.

CHARLIE STONE, Director, Outreach and Training Services Unit, began his state career as a State Trooper with the Texas Department of Public Safety. He worked in the private sector, served two terms as County Judge of Refugio County, and served three years as legislative assistant for Representative Judy Hawley (D) Portland during the 76th and 77th sessions of the state Legislature. He has a BS degree from Southwest Texas State University in Criminal Law Enforcement and is currently pursuing postgraduate work in a Certified Public Management Program (CPM) from the LBJ School of Public Affairs at The University of Texas in Austin.

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To email a member of the ORCA staff, address the missive to the staff member's first initial and full last name@orca.state.tx.us. For example, for Ann Deweese use adeweese@orca.state.tx.us.

Just want to send comments to the agency in general? Send your email to orca@orca.state.tx.us.

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."



Spotlight on . . .

Texas Organization of Rural and Community Hospitals

By David Pearson, TORCH

The Texas Organization of Rural and Community Hospitals (TORCH), founded in 1990, is the only hospital association dedicated to the needs of rural and small community hospitals in Texas.

Since its inception, TORCH's membership has grown to 160 hospitals. Any general acute care hospital, regardless of location, with fewer than 150 beds may become a member. This allows TORCH to bridge the gap between rural and urban providers.

TORCH has strong relationships with elected officials at the state and federal levels, as well as a reputation for providing useful information for policymakers. As an advocate for rural healthcare providers, TORCH maintains relationships with numerous stakeholder groups, including the Office of Rural Community Affairs.

Over the years, TORCH has established itself as the unified voice for small hospitals and has shown true leadership in the area of regulatory and financial reform.

TORCH provides educational conferences and seminars. The largest of these is the TORCH Annual Education Conference and Trade Show, which routinely attracts 500 attendees and 80 exhibitors. This conference gives rural hospital administrators, board members, and staff the information and tools they need to remain competitive in today's healthcare marketplace. Other seminars regarding quality, finance, and operational issues are held at various times during the year. In addition to TORCH's regularly scheduled events, corporate members also provide services and education for hospital members.

TORCH has a number of publications and on-line resources available. "Frontline," TORCH's premier communiqué, offers insight and detailed information on topics pertinent to rural hospital care providers. This semimonthly newsletter is distributed to all TORCH members to keep them apprised of the current state of affairs in rural health. "Capitol Voice," the advocacy bulletin, along with "Reg

Look for ORCA to Spotlight your community in the next issue of The Rural Texan.

The City of Newton

By Mark Karpel, President, Newton County Chamber of Commerce

Newton, Texas, is located in the Pineywoods on the easternmost edge of the Big Thicket. Newton County was formed in 1846 when it was separated from Jasper County. The City of Newton, located near the center of Newton County, was laid out in 1853 and became the permanent county seat in 1855.

Located on U.S. Highway 190 and Texas Highway 87, Newton is nestled among flowering dogwoods, rebuds, and pines. "Newton *Naturally*" is a motto that reflects the abundant native and rare plants that inhabit the area. Nearby Wild Azalea Canyon is an inside pocket wilderness noted for its Longleaf Pine forest, rock cliffs, and wild Azaleas which bloom every spring and attracts visitors from all over the world.

Close to the City of Newton are four Birding Sites located on the Upper Texas Coast Birding Trail. Swallowtail Kites and Bald Eagles are just a few of the many migratory birds that may be seen at different times of the year. Several nature trails further enhance the opportunity for visitors to marvel at the diverse ecosystems unique to the Newton area.

The present courthouse was completed in 1903 and features a Second Empire style edifice common to only one other courthouse in Texas, located in Shackelford County. In August of 2000, the historic

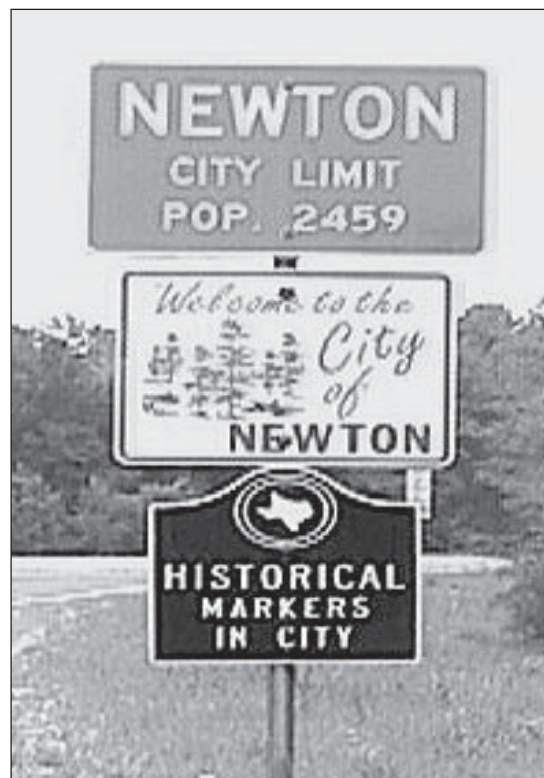
courthouse was victim to a disastrous fire. Fortunately, the architects and engineers deemed the magnificent exterior walls sound and restoration began in the fall of 2001. When completed, this stunning and historic building will offer visitors and county residents an opportunity to "step back in time" as a result of the great amount of old world craftsmanship and detail that will be a part of the restoration process.

Newton is truly a historian's dream. A "must see" is the Newton County Historical Commission's History Center and Museum. The Center is widely recognized for its genealogical library, artifacts, and archives. It has been awarded the Distinguished Service Award from the Texas Historical Commission for 29 consecutive years. The latest Newton historical preservation project is the renovation of the Powell Hotel Museum, located across from the Courthouse. Built in 1889, this beautiful

structure features several rooms furnished with artifacts from long-term guests who lived in the Hotel over 50 years ago!

Today, many families and businesses find Newton a perfect location. Life moves a bit slower, nature abounds, and fresh water is plentiful. Friendly business owners, an outstanding school district, a caring and effective city government, excellent church and spiritual foundations, and abundant recreational activities make Newton the home of "Clean Air, Fresh Water, Friendly People!"

For more information on Newton, visit www.Newton-Texas.com



Line" and "Legal Line," have information about regulatory and legislative issues.

The website, www.torchnet.org, contains copies of TORCH's printed publications, a library of news clippings about rural hospitals, and information about TORCH affiliated organizations.

At TORCH, the motto is "Big enough to help...Small enough to care." Every effort is

made to ensure that rural hospitals in Texas receive the recognition and compensation they deserve for the vital care they provide.

Keeping rural Texans healthy is one of ORCA's many goals. TORCH stands ready to assist in this effort by maintaining high-quality healthcare services and supporting rural and community hospitals across this great state. For more information, contact David Pearson at the TORCH office at 512-873-0045.

Part I: After the Disaster . . . Then What?

By Gus Garcia, ORCA

When a disaster strikes a community in Texas, a chain of events involving local, regional, state, and federal agencies is set into motion.

First, local officials in the affected area contact their local Disaster District Chairperson (DDC) to report the disaster. This is often an official of the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS). The DDC will instruct the community to provide three types of assessments:

- ♦ rapid assessment,
- ♦ windshield assessment, and
- ♦ site assessment.

Rapid Assessment and Response Agencies

The community conducts a rapid assessment to evaluate humanitarian and emergency needs such as life safety (search and rescue, injuries, and fatalities), lifelines (utilities and transportation systems), and essential facilities (medical, emergency, and communication services).

After the community completes its rapid assessment, the Texas Department of Public Safety's Division of Emergency Management (DEM) steps in and brings together the appropriate organizations to offer immediate relief assistance and assess damages. These organizations, referred to as "response" agencies, may include the Red Cross, the Texas Department of Transportation, and other agencies like the Texas Forest Service, as applicable. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Small Business Administration (SBA), the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA), and the Texas Department of Human Services (TDHS) may also be invited by DEM to be a part of the initial assessment team if the disaster involves massive housing damage, as in Storm Allison.

Windshield Assessment and Recovery Agencies

After the danger has passed, immediate needs have been identified, and the response agencies notified, the DDC begins assisting the area in performing a more detailed assessment to determine the extent of the damage to residential property, businesses, and public property. This is known as a "windshield assessment" and can normally begin within hours of the event. It may take several days to complete, depending on the extent of damage, accessibility, and the number of assessment teams available. In a flood, the windshield assessment may have to be delayed until the water has subsided. One element that distinguishes a rapid assessment from a windshield assessment is consideration of insurance coverage.

Site Assessment

After the windshield assessment, the locality may be required to conduct a "site assessment", which is a more specific and detailed damage assessment. Based on this assessment, a determination can be made if an area qualifies for Small Business Administration (SBA) or public property assistance. This will determine which state and/or federal recovery agencies DEM may call as part of an assessment team and dispatch them to the locality. Based on the assessment developed by such agencies as Office of Rural Community Affairs (ORCA), the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs; the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS); TDHS; or federal agencies such as FEMA and SBA, a recommendation is then made to the Governor whether to seek federal assistance, issue a state declaration, or neither.

Assistance from the SBA, ORCA, TDHCA, or other public property assistance resource may be requested during this time, and/or the area may be determined eligible for a state or federal disaster declaration to be requested on their behalf.

This assistance may include helping families with no insurance rebuild their homes; helping a city reconstruct its water tower and water system; or helping counties repair damage to bridges, culverts, and county roads. If only a few homes and some infrastructure damage occurred, as in the community of Happy, grants from TDHCA and ORCA may be the only assistance available for the community. (See related story on page 13.)

Additional resources may be available if an official declaration of disaster is made by either the governor (state) or the president (federal).

See Part II: "After the Declaration . . . Who Helps?" in the Fall 2002 issue of The Rural Texan.

ORCA was created to facilitate and focus on the State's health, economic development, and community development programs that target rural communities in Texas. ORCA is the door to Texas government for rural citizens.

ORCA, TDHCA Work on Rural Set-Aside for Affordable Housing

By Oralia Cardenas, ORCA

ORCA will have an opportunity to work with the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) to further enhance the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program's rural set-aside to meet some of the housing needs in rural Texas communities.

The LIHTC Program provides a means of directing private funds toward the creation of affordable rental housing developments that meet the rural definition under the program's Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP). The QAP describes the distribution, scoring, and compliance monitoring processes of the LIHTC program, as administered by TDHCA. Under certain restrictions, developers of low-income rental housing use the tax credit to offset a portion of their federal tax liability in exchange for the production of affordable rental housing.

Senate Bill 322, enacted during the 77th legislative session, requires ORCA's participation in the LIHTC rural set-aside, including developing thresholds, scoring, training, and outreach. For the 2002 program allocation cycle, ORCA will play a limited role, since the LIHTC process for 2002 was well underway at the time ORCA was established. ORCA agreed to participate in completing pre-funding visits to the proposed sites for the 2002 cycle and will be more involved in the rural set-aside for the 2003 cycle. ORCA will be participating in roundtable discussions this Summer, along with TDHCA and various representatives, to obtain input for the 2003 QAP, including the rural set-aside. The QAP will be available for public comment sometime during Fall 2002.

Contact TDHCA staff at 512-475-3296 for additional information regarding the LIHTC program.

The Rural Texan wants to hear from you!

If you have views, comments, or suggestions about rural issues that you would like to share with other rural readers in Texas and across the country, please send them to:

The Rural Texan
c/o Office of Rural Community Affairs
P.O. Box 12877
Austin, TX 78711
or E-mail to:
orca@orca.state.tx.us

ORCA will consider all contributions
for publication.

Housing Infrastructure Project in Elgin a Success

By Jennifer Boyer, ORCA, and Earl Peck, Earl Peck Land Co., Inc.

The Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF), a part of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program of ORCA, was an overwhelming success for the city of Elgin. Breaking ground in September 1998, the city of Elgin worked with a development team to create the first phase of the Shenandoah Subdivision, consisting of 74 housing units located near a new high school.

While the city initially targeted 51 percent of the units built under this program to benefit persons of low to moderate income, as required by program guidelines, at the completion of the project in August 2001, 55 percent of the units were reported to be occupied by low- and moderate-income families.



One of the homes built in Elgin with assistance from the HIF program of ORCA.

The rapid sale of the first phase of the subdivision facilitated an expansion into a second phase consisting of an additional 56 units, which sold rapidly as well.

The HIF provides infrastructure grants in support of affordable single-family and multifamily low- to moderate-income housing. Funds may not be used for the actual construction costs of new housing, however



The HIF program provided funds to assist with building the infrastructure necessary to complete the first phase of the Shenandoah Subdivision in Elgin.

public facilities, engineering, and administrative costs are all eligible activities. Projects leverage public and/or private resources for construction costs related to the housing units and any other project costs that are not eligible for assistance.

Participating communities often provide in-kind contributions to the project by waiving permit fees and a portion of the impact fees. The grant assistance and in-kind contributions enable the development team to lower lot prices, thereby making the housing more accessible for target families.

According to Jim Dunaway, Elgin city manager, "More families and businesses are moving to the city of Elgin as a direct result of the availability of affordable housing. The city has benefited economically from new businesses establishing roots in our community."

Mr. Dunaway also stated that the city's experience with the ORCA Housing Infrastructure Fund grant program "has been a very positive one" for the community.

Available from ORCA

Health Information Systems Guidebook

Most rural hospitals can benefit from the careful and appropriate implementation of modern Information Systems. Converting raw data into "information" for rapid, accurate decision-making is what information systems are all about.

Now, there is a handy guidebook to help rural hospital administrators make more informed decisions when addressing their information system needs.

The *Hospital Information Systems Guidebook*:

- ♦ Provides an overview of what modern Hospital Information Systems (HIS) can offer;
- ♦ Suggests an approach to selecting a new HIS; and
- ♦ Suggests some of the questions to ask vendors before considering their products.

The Guidebook also contains a *Technology Overview* designed to meet the needs of those individuals desiring a brief, plain language overview of the technology involved in modern Hospital Information Systems, and a glossary with definitions of technical terms.

To download a copy of the Guidebook, visit ORCA's website. To order a CD-rom, contact ORCA.

TELEMEDICINE MAKING INROADS IN WEST TEXAS

If you're ever in Terlingua and need emergency surgery, you'll probably be thankful for the federal grant given to Odessa Emergency Providers Achievement Fund (OEPAF) recently. That's because the nonprofit OEPAF will give the money to Terlingua Medics Inc.

"The Terlingua company will use the money to stock its one ambulance with \$71,838 worth of telemedicine equipment like monitors and networking equipment," said Dr. David Spear, president of OEPAF and an Odessa doctor. "Paramedics don't sew up people anywhere else because of liability," said Spear, who has given emergency medical training to Terlingua medics. "But in Terlingua, we let paramedics handle things the doctors would normally do because of the unique circumstances."

"Terlingua is 100 miles from the nearest hospital in Alpine, and about 250 miles from Odessa," explained J. Mejewski, paramedic and Executive Director of Terlingua Medics. "Because of the area's remoteness, serious injuries or health conditions in Terlingua or the surrounding area of Presidio or Brewster counties might not be treated in time by doctors who are at least a two-hour drive away," Mejewski continued. That's where telemedicine comes in. If someone near the border were in need of immediate treatment, paramedics could dial up Spear in Odessa and get instructions on how to treat a serious heart attack or sew up a deep wound. "The patient would be given the option of having to wait until he got to a hospital or having the medic do the procedure with a doctor's instruction," Spear said.

Though Spear is the primary doctor involved with the telemedicine project, some day physicians from around the world could be contacted for medical assistance via satellite. "Because of the fact that the hospitals are so far away down there, it's to the patient's benefit to have that option," Mejewski said.

Adapted from an article by Ian Heald, in the Odessa American.

Loving County and the 2000 Census

Loving County was the only one to claim 100 percent native Texan. It also reported the highest number of residents who walk to work: 21.1 percent.

Total population of Loving County is 67, according to the US Census.

Healthcare Job Fair Set for September

By Jill McFarren, ORCA

Healthcare professionals and those in training are invited to attend an annual healthcare job fair, HealthFind. HealthFind offers healthcare professionals and representatives from rural Texas communities and medical facilities the opportunity to meet face-to-face to discuss practitioner availability and job opportunities. The event eliminates the time and expense associated with traditional recruiting and application procedures.

Healthcare professionals are encouraged to take advantage of this worthwhile occasion to learn about job opportunities and the characteristics and highlights of various rural Texas communities looking for professionals.

"HealthFind is a casual, friendly environment for physicians and rural health care representatives to meet each other and learn what each has to offer," explained Robt. J. "Sam" Tessen, MS, ORCA's Executive Director. Tessen anticipates significantly greater opportunities for successful links between professionals and communities at HealthFind this year than in previous years.

Healthcare professionals who attended HealthFind 2001, described the event as a not-to-be-missed opportunity noting, "There is no other event in Texas where I can check out over 36 practice opportunities and the communities' quality-of-life in one location."

HealthFind 2002 will be held on Saturday, September 14, and Sunday, September 15, 2002, in Austin.

If you have questions or would like to register to attend HealthFind 2002, contact Robin Wright at ORCA at 512-936-6732, toll free in Texas at 800-544-2042, or by E-mail at rwright@orca.state.tx.us.

Registration deadline is August 20, 2002.

Making Indigent Care More Accessible

The directors of the Big Bend Regional Hospital District recently made the district's indigent care program more inclusive by raising the standard to 35 percent of the federal poverty guidelines through the rest of the fiscal year, which ends September 30, 2002. Patients qualify for inclusion into the indigent program based on their income and the government guidelines on poverty levels. The hospital district has the power to stretch the income restrictions for indigent patients and district directors chose to do so.

(Continued on page 20)

Critical Access Hospitals Receive Grants

By Al Lewis, LP, ORCA

The Office of Rural Community Affairs has completed its first cycle of the Critical Access Hospital (CAH) EMS Flex Grant (CAH/EMS Flex Grant), and the award checks have been distributed. Thirteen of Texas' 26 facilities designated as critical access hospitals at the time of the funding program deadline took the opportunity to apply for available funds to purchase training equipment and/or provide certification/recertification of courses such as Basic Trauma Life Support (BTLS), Advanced Life Support (ALS), Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS), Automated External Defibrillator (AED), and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).

These hospitals will use the equipment and provide training courses. The training will be for hospital staffs as well as pre-hospital emergency medical providers who are affiliated with or located near the awarded CAH. A total of \$34,941 was allocated to the 13 hospitals.

The following awards were made:

Hospital Name	Project
Ballinger Memorial Hospital	Laerdal Infant intubation, an Airway Management Trainer, and a PALS Trainer
Bayside Community Hospital (MSA)	A BTLS Recertification Class
Fisher County Hospital District	CPR Training Equipment
Lillian Hudspeth Memorial Hospital	An EMT Class
Limestone Medical Center	A Resuscitation Anne Torso, a Kelly Intubation Torso, and an Adult IV arm and Hand
Linden Community Hospital	Group training in ACLS & PALS
Madison St. Joseph Health Center & Burleson St. Joseph	A resuscitation mannequin used by both hospitals
McCamey Hospital	ALS trainer Manikin and AED Trainer
Presbyterian Hospital of Commerce	AED Trainer & ACLS Torso with dysrhythmia Generator
Reagan Memorial Hospital	PALS Education
Sweeny Community Hospital (MSA)	Adult airway Management training Manikin, a Tension Pneumothorax Chest, a Cricothyrotomy Simulator, and an Advanced Moulage Kit
Winkler County Memorial Hospital	Defibrillator/CPR Trainer with AED adapter trainer
Yoakum County Hospital	ALS Crisis Manikin

Congratulations to all the critical access hospitals that took the initiative to work with the pre-hospital providers in their community to apply for a CAH/EMS Flex Grant. It is hospitals like these that help maintain the quality of care needed in the rural and frontier areas of Texas.

Discount Drug Card Available for Elderly Texans

Seven major drug companies are offering elderly consumers a discount card that will let them save on more than 100 brand-name drugs. The Together RX Card will be offered free to eligible Medicare enrollees, the companies said.

Participating in the new card are Abbott Laboratories, Astra-Zeneca, Aventis, Bristol-Myers Squibb Co., GlaxoSmithKline, Johnson & Johnson and Novartis.

The card will offer discounts on more than 145 widely used drugs, including many used to treat asthma, arthritis, depression, diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

There is no charge for the cards, which will be available to people who lack prescription drug coverage and have incomes of up to \$28,000, or \$38,000 for couples.

Reprinted from the Times-Record-News, Wichita Falls, TX.

Webb County Accesses Various Funding Sources to Address Local Needs

By Jennifer Boyer, ORCA

Webb County, located along the Texas/Mexico border, has a population of 193,180, according to the 1999 estimated census, as reported by the Texas Alliance for Human Needs, Gateway Community Health Center. The County faces many challenges, including having a reported poverty rate estimated at 35.2 percent, while the reported average poverty rate in Texas is 16.54 percent. The report further indicates that the county's unemployment rate is estimated at 6.1 percent, close to double the state's unemployment rate of 3.9 percent. The county is characterized as having a large number of residents living in impoverished areas known as colonias.

In an effort to improve the quality of life for residents, particularly for low- and moderate-income persons, the county has actively pursued opportunities to access grant programs from federal agencies, including the US Department of Health and Human Services, US Department of Labor, and the US Department of Rural Development, and state agencies such as the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and Texas Work Force Commission. The county has also received funding directly from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, under specific Notices of Funding Availability, to address housing and other needs in the colonias. Webb County participates in ORCA's Texas Community Development Program (TCDP) and has received funding to improve conditions in the unincorporated areas of the county and in the colonias through the Colonia Fund and the Colonia Self-Help Centers set-aside. During the past five years, the county has accessed approximately \$5.6 million in funds from the TCDP and committed \$1.3 million in matching funds.

With such high needs, the county has skillfully accessed a variety of other funding sources, some of which are not well known to most communities. These include public service programs for rural populations, including free dental care through the University of Texas Dental School, and free clinics through St. Mary's University that address immigration law and domestic violence, as well as low-interest loan programs available through the North American Development Bank. The county has also received grants from the US Department of Justice to improve law enforcement capacity, the Texas Department of Health for emergency medical services, the US Environmental Protection Agency for an environmental planning grant, and the Texas Water

ORCA Awards \$48.1 Million to Rural Texas Communities

Grants from Texas Community Development Program address public facility, housing, and planning needs

By Jill McFarren, ORCA

ORCA awarded 203 grants totaling \$48,171,329 to rural communities and counties across the state on April 10, 2002. The awards represent the biennial funding distributions from the Texas Community Development Programs' Community Development, Housing Rehabilitation, and Planning and Capacity Building funds.

Activities funded by these grants provide for potable (safe drinking) water, sanitary sewer service, and other public facility services and improvements; housing rehabilitation; and planning support for assessing local needs, developing strategies to address local needs, and building or improving local capacity to address these activities.

"The Office of Rural Community Affairs applauds the efforts of all the rural community and county representatives who submitted applications for funding from these programs," said Robt. J. "Sam" Tessen, MS, ORCA's Executive Director. "These funds are an important factor in supporting our rural areas, and ORCA is very appreciative to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for this assistance, which allows our state government to reach out to support rural areas in their efforts to meet their basic human needs. ORCA looks forward to working with its fellow Texans to ensure their continued success in building strong rural communities."

The *Community Development Fund* awards grants on a competitive basis to address housing and public facility needs such as sewer, water system, road, and drainage improvements. A total of 138 rural communities and 33 rural counties received awards from this fund for a total of \$45,918,529.

The *Housing Rehabilitation Fund* makes grants available through a statewide competitive process for the rehabilitation of existing owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing units and, in strictly limited circumstances, the construction of new housing that is accessible to persons with disabilities. A total of five rural communities and one rural county received awards from this fund for a total of \$1,475,300.

The *Planning and Capacity Building Fund* awards grants on a competitive basis to eligible cities and counties. The grants enable these communities to assess and develop strategies to address local needs and plan for the future. Public facilities, housing and economic development are just a few of the elements explored in the planning process. For the 2002 Program Year 26 rural communities received awards totaling \$777,500.

ORCA administers the federal funds that are available to Texas through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Program. In Texas, the program is referred to as the "Texas Community Development Program" or TCDP. All TCDP projects must primarily benefit low- to moderate-income households in accordance with federal regulations and state guidelines.

Quick Tips

20 CLUES TO RURAL COMMUNITY SURVIVAL

- Evidence of Community Pride:** Successful communities are often showplaces of care, attention, history and heritage.
- Emphasis on Quality in Business and Community Life:** People believe that something worth doing is worth doing right.
- Willingness to Invest in the Future:** In addition to the brick-and-mortar investments, all decisions are made with an outlook on the future.
- Participatory Approach to Community Decision Making:** Even the most powerful of opinion leaders seem to work toward building consensus.
- Cooperative Community Spirit:** The stress is on working together toward a common goal, and the focus is on positive results.
- Realistic Appraisal of Future Opportunities:** Successful communities have learned how to build on strengths and minimize weaknesses.
- Awareness of Competitive Positioning:** Local loyalty is emphasized, but thriving communities know who their competitors are and position themselves accordingly.
- Knowledge of the Physical Environment:** Relative location and available natural resources underscore decision-making.
- Active Economic Development Program:** There is an organized, public/private approach to economic development.

(Continued on page 20)



Learning Opportunities

Practices Affecting Border Health

A symposium addressing border health issues will be held on October 9-11, 2002, at the Sheraton Fiesta on South Padre Island. Increasing quality and years of healthy life and eliminating health disparities among Texas-Mexico border populations are the primary goals. Topics to be addressed include health promotion, disease prevention, health protection, and community education. The target audience is health professionals and others interested in border health.

The symposium is being organized by The University of Texas-Pan American Border Health Office (UTBHO). The fee is \$125 until September 13; \$150 after September 13. Abstracts for presentations are being solicited, with a deadline of July 26.

For additional information, contact the UTBHO at 956-381-3687.

User Liaison Program

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), US Department of Health and Human Services, is offering the following national workshops:

July 28-Aug. 2 - Using Policy Analysis and Research More Effectively in Decisionmaking
Rensselaerville, NY

Sept. 23-25 - Children with Special Health Care Needs
Los Angeles, CA

Late Sept. 2002 - Patient Safety (web-assisted audio conference)
Dates & times TBD

Oct. 2002 - Causes and Potential Solutions to High Cost of health Care (web-assisted audio conference)
Dates & times TBD

Please contact AHRQ's User Liaison Program for additional information at 301-594-6668.

Check the ORCA website for a calendar of upcoming rural events.

Upcoming NOEP Classes

Here are the upcoming classes being presented by the Texas Nurses Foundation, Nurse Oncology Education Program (NOEP), for nurses and social workers who deal with cancer patients.

Date	Class	Location
July 27	Secrets of Rapport: Empowering Nurses	Dallas
Sept 5-8	Texas Nurse Practitioners Conference	Fort Worth
Sept 14	Palliative Care	Austin
Sept 19	Communicating with the Cancer Patient	Dallas
Sept 20	Cancer Symptom Management	Alvin
Oct 4	Cancer of GI Tract/Hepatitis C	Laredo
Oct 5	Breast & Gynecologic Cancer	Fort Worth
Oct 11	Cancer of GI Tract/Hepatitis C	Palestine
Oct 18	Breast & Gynecologic Cancer	Odessa

For more information, or to register for workshops, please call NOEP at 800-515-6770 or in Austin at 512-467-2803. You can visit their website at www.noep.org. They are funded by the Texas Cancer Council. NOEP offers continuing education credits for nurses and social workers.

Open Government 2002

Traveling symposium develops and enhances understanding of open government

Open Government 2002 is a traveling symposium to develop and enhance understanding of the changing landscape of open government. Sessions will address hot topics in public information and open meetings law and will include a legislative update on changes made during the 77th Legislative session.

The symposium is directed toward the general public, government employees, elected officials, and representatives of the media. Each symposium will feature experienced attorneys and others knowledgeable in this important area of law.

Schedule

Friday, August 9 - Robert R. Muntz Library, Room 401 - UT Tyler, Tyler, Texas

Friday, October 25 - UTEP Student Union, Thomas Rivera Room, El Paso, Texas

Sponsored by: Office of the Attorney General - www.oag.state.tx.us
Texas Association of Regional Councils - www.txregionalcouncil.org
The Freedom of Information Foundation of Texas - www.foift.org

Visit one of the websites listed above for additional information.

Opportunities for Local Government

The Texas Chapter of the American Planning Association (TCAPA), the Texas Association of Regional Councils (TARC), and the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) are providing a series of training sessions for local government officials. The 2002 sessions will include the following topics:

- Texas Planning: What you need to Know in 2002
- Being an Effective Planning Commissioner: Roles, Responsibilities, Ethics, and Legal
- The Subdivision Ordinance: Its Fundamentals, Including Statutory and Judicial Authority
- Impact Fees: How to Maximize Municipal Revenue
- Learn by Doing: An Exercise in Decision Making
- The Capital Improvements Program: Its Role in Comprehensive Plan Implementation

Schedule:

July 25	Golden Crescent Regional Planning Comm., Victoria
Aug. 2	South Plains Assoc. of Governments, Lubbock
Aug. 8	Central Texas COG, Belton/Temple
Aug. 15	TEXOMA COG, Sherman
Aug. 15	East Texas COG, Jefferson
Sept. 12	Heart of Texas COG, Waco
Sept. 18	Houston/Galveston Area Council, Houston
Sept. 20	APA Southmost Section, South Padre Island

For more information, contact Dick Lillie at TCAPA, by phone/fax at 512-306-1674 or e-mail at dickl@tcapa.org



Funding Opportunities

New Rural Water Assistance Fund

By Carla Daws, Texas Water Development Board

In 2001, the 77th Texas Legislature created the Rural Water Assistance Fund (RWF) program and named the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) as administrator of the program. The RWF program is designed to provide low-interest loans to rural political subdivisions for water projects. Loans will be available on a first-come, first-served basis to qualifying rural entities. The TWDB will hold a pre-application conference to guide the potential borrower in completing a funding application. In approving a loan application, the TWDB will consider:

- ♦ the needs of the area to be served by the project,
- ♦ the benefit of the project to the area,
- ♦ the relationship of the project to the overall state water needs,
- ♦ the relationship of the project to the State Water Plan, and
- ♦ the borrower's available revenue sources for the ultimate repayment of the project cost.

For more information on the RWF program, contact George Green at the Texas Water Development Board, 512-463-7853 or by e-mail at ggreen@twdb.state.tx.us.

RWJF Accepting Applications for Local Health Matching Grants*

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is preparing to accept grant applications for its Local Initiative Funding Partners program. Under LIFP, a local grantmaker joins with RWJF to support local projects that promote healthy communities and life styles, help provide more people with health insurance, and achieve other local health goals.

The program provides 36- to 48-month matching grants of \$100,000-\$500,000. Up to \$8 million will be awarded next year.

The deadlines are in several stages.

- ♦ On-line preregistration is due in July.
- ♦ Stage 1 application is due August 1, but RWJF encourages grantseekers to get these applications in July.
- ♦ Grant award period begins July 2003

For additional information contact Orrin Hardgrove at 609-275-4128 or e-mail at thardgrove@lifp.org or visit www.lifp.org.

\$5,000 Grants for Low-income Kids' Tooth Care*

The ADA Health Foundation, an offshoot of the American Dental Association, is accepting applications for \$5,000 grants to community-based organizations promoting dental care for underserved kids.

The foundation prefers to fund efforts with a history of or potential for long-term operation. It aspires to significantly reduce the incidence of children's oral disease and help instill oral health promotion activities for children most at risk.

Application deadline is July 31, 2002. For more information, contact Robert Czarnecki, 312-440-2544, e-mail czarneckir@ada.org; or visit www.adahf.org/childgrant.html.

USDA Offers Grants for Rural Community Facilities

Community Programs, a division of the Rural Housing Service, is part of the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Development mission area. Community Programs administers programs designed to develop essential community facilities for public use in rural areas. These facilities include schools, libraries, child care, hospitals, medical clinics, assisted living facilities, fire and rescue stations, police stations, community centers, public buildings and transportation.

Through its Community Programs, the USDA is striving to ensure that such facilities are readily available to all rural communities. Community Programs uses three flexible financial tools to achieve this goal: the Community Facilities Guaranteed Loan Program, the Community Facilities Direct Loan Program, and the Community Facilities Grant Program.

More information on the programs is available on the USDA website at www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs/cf/cp.htm

2002 Farm Bill Creates New Funding Sources

Rural Strategic Investment Program

On May 13, President Bush signed into law the 2002 Farm Bill, which includes a new \$100 million Rural Strategic Investment Program. Certified regional investment boards, overseen by a national board, can compete for funds to plan and carry out community and economic development. The program is intended to enable rural communities to develop strategic plans and "implement innovative community and economic development strategies that optimize regional competitive advantages." Nonmetropolitan counties with 50,000 or fewer residents are eligible to participate. A summary of the Bill is available at www.ruralhome.org/announce/farbill.htm.

Farm Security and Rural Investment Act

The signing of the 2002 Farm Bill also enacted the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act. According to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), "this heralds unprecedented funding for conservation of Texas water, soil, and wildlife." It will provide much needed support for declining wildlife species, including the northern bobwhite quail.

Some of the other programs addressed in the Act include:

- ♦ Conservation Reserve Program
- ♦ Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- ♦ Grassland Reserve Program
- ♦ Wildlife Incentives Program
- ♦ Forest Land Enhancement Program
- ♦ Conservation Security Program

Some of the programs have limited sign-up windows, so interested landowners should contact their local Natural Resource Conservation Service or Farm Services Agency office as soon as possible, or call the TPWD Farm Bill Coordinator Chuck Kowaleski at 254-742-9874.

**Reprinted with permission from Community Health Funding Report. For a complimentary copy of the Funding Report, call 800-666-6380.*

ORCA Awards \$2.9 Million to Rural Texas Communities for Disaster Relief Efforts

By Ann Dewees, ORCA

The bad news is that Texas has sustained a number of natural disasters in the recent past. The good news is that ORCA has a program to assist communities in dealing with the aftermath of these disasters.

The Disaster Relief Fund is one of eight Texas Community Development Program (TCDP) funds that provide financial assistance to cities under 50,000 in population and counties under 200,000 in population. Assistance from the Disaster Relief/Urgent Need Fund is available to communities and counties officially declared disaster areas by either the Governor or the President of the United States. Typically, the disaster relief funds are accessible only after all other federal resources are exhausted. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is the funding source for this program.

"These funds are specifically designed to assist communities with their recovery from natural disasters that pose a serious public safety or health hazard," said Robt. J. "Sam" Tessen, MS, ORCA's Executive Director.

Since joining ORCA in December 2001, TCDP has awarded Disaster Relief funds as follows:

City/County	Award amount	Disaster	Recovery projects
Clarendon	\$350,000	Flooding	Matching grant and some mitigation measures
Dekalb	\$111,994	Tornado	Housing rehabilitation assistance
Happy	\$350,000	Tornado	Housing repair and reconstruction
Hondo	\$350,000	Tornadoes	Remove debris and repair damages
Caldwell County	\$350,000	Storm	Matching grant
Donley County	\$256,460	Heavy rain	Matching grant to repair bridges and some mitigation measures
Jim Hogg County	\$350,000	Flooding	Cleanup and meet environmental standards
Karnes County	\$350,000	Heavy rain	Matching grant
Limestone County	\$209,540	Tornado	Debris removal and reconstruction of roads and bridges
Matagorda County	\$225,280	Heavy rain	Repair roads and drainage structures
Swisher County	\$350,000	Tornado	Debris removal and housing repair
Wilson County	\$350,000	Flooding	Repair roads

Tips for Writing Winning Federal Grants

- Follow directions.** Do as you are told. If they want a 12-page application, write 12 pages, no more.
- Involve stakeholders.** Engage as many community residents and advocates as possible in the proposal-development process. Solicit testimonials from several to include with the proposal, if appropriate.
- Use professional grant writers.** Hire grant writers who love to write—and train them.
- Match federal priorities.** Identify the grant prerequisite and play up your strengths in this area.
- Find partners.** Grant evaluators look to see whom the applicant partners with. Identify key mentoring organizations and collaborators.

For additional information on this topic, contact James Stewart, 391-336-3000.

Excerpted with permission from the Community Health Funding Report, May 23, 2002. To request a complimentary copy of the Funding Report, call 800-666-6380.

ORCA Awards \$2.4 Million to Rural Communities for Housing

By Ann Dewees, ORCA

On March 6, 2002, ORCA awarded grants totaling \$2,400,000 to six rural Texas communities for single-family housing development. The awards of \$400,000 each were selected through an annual competition for the agency's Housing Infrastructure Fund. The funds provide for infrastructure such as water, sewer, street, and drainage systems in projects associated with the development of affordable single-family or multi-family housing for low- to moderate-income individuals.

This year's awards will support construction of an estimated 163 affordable single-family housing units.

The cities receiving these awards and their target single-family development projects are:

City	County	Number of units
Elgin	Bastrop	61
Lufkin	Angelina	23
Nash	Bowie	30
Navasota	Grimes	15
Pecos	Reeves	20
Woodville	Tyler	14

The Housing Infrastructure Fund is one of eight funds administered under ORCA's Texas Community Development Program. The TCDP funds, which come from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, are designed to meet the diverse needs of the citizens of Texas.

For more information about ORCA's Housing Infrastructure Fund, contact ORCA.

Microentrepreneurs

When researchers at the Aspen Institute (AI) studied a sizable number of low-income entrepreneurs in the early- through mid-1990s, they found:

- 72 percent of low-income entrepreneurs saw increases in household income over five years.
- More than half (53 percent) of low-income entrepreneurs had household gains large enough to move out of poverty.
- For most low-income entrepreneurs, running a business was not merely a hobby for extra pocket money.

Among those microentrepreneurs who left poverty, the small business was a major source of household income.

Reprinted with permission from The TAHN Monitor.

STEP Grants Provide Dual Benefits

By Cynthia Vallejo, ORCA

Guided by the Rensselaerville Institute*, ORCA's Community Development Program, in collaboration with the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, the Texas Department of Health, the Texas Water Development Board, and the General Land Office, created the Texas Small Towns Environment Partnership (Texas STEP) to provide, expertise, technical assistance, and funding options to rural communities experiencing water and wastewater problems. The communities provide the volunteer "sweat equity" to complete the project.

The Texas STEP self-help framework asks residents three important questions. 1) Is the community ready to solve their problem? 2) What skills, equipment or other resources can the community bring to the self-help table? 3) And do you have a community leader(s) to spearhead the project? Two communities recently answered those questions and found out they had not only the desire to solve their problems, but the skills, equipment, and lots of sweat to add to the mix.

The city of Blanket, recently awarded a Texas STEP fund grant, will use volunteers to install 9,000 linear feet of water line and a 50,000-gallon storage tank. The city will then contract with a drilling company to dig two new wells that will provide a new clean water source for this small community.

Kanawha is another community recently funded through Texas STEP. The small community in Red River County faced the challenge of installing 87,000 linear feet of water line. This unincorporated area will receive first-time water service as a result of this grant and their hard work. Resident Jay Looney has challenged other STEP projects in Texas and throughout the United States to beat Kanawha's one day total of laying 5,400 linear feet of pipe.

Since its inception in 1986, Texas has had the premiere STEP program in the United States, having awarded more than \$14 million in funds and saving over \$15 million off of the retail cost of local projects. Aside from the obvious benefit communities gain from the STEP projects, there is also a renewed sense of community cohesiveness and neighborhood spirit generated by working on these projects.

For a more detailed example of the benefits derived from Texas STEP, see the article about Kennedy Ridge on page 18.

**The Rensselaerville Institute is an innovative education center with the mission of enabling communities to improve people's lives in sustainable ways through diverse projects. It is independent and nonprofit. For more information, visit info@rinstitute.org.*

Happy Tornado Relief Efforts

By Jarrett Atkinson, Panhandle Regional Planning Commission, Amarillo

On the evening of May 5, 2002, the city of Happy was struck by an F-2 tornado. Damage occurred primarily to the southern part of town. One church received extensive damage, twelve to fifteen homes were destroyed, and a like number of homes sustained damage. In addition, the Happy Independent School District lost its bus barn and agricultural pens. The tornado was also responsible for two fatalities and four injuries requiring hospitalization. At least twelve families were displaced, including 20 school-age children.

Happy has received tremendous support in terms of labor, equipment, necessity items, and cash donations. Public entities from more than 90 miles away have provided manpower and equipment to help with the immediate cleanup needs. The extensive list of entities providing assistance includes relief organizations, religious organizations, private citizens, private businesses, and many public entities. The assistance has gone a long way to completing the initial cleanup process. Local relief organizations, charitable donors, and volunteers are already preparing to repair the homes owned by low-to-moderate income senior citizens. Swisher County and the city of Happy have lead the way in addressing this disaster.

On May 9, 2002, representatives from ORCA's Disaster Relief program and the HOME disaster relief program of the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) met with TXDPS-DEM, the mayor of Happy and the Swisher County Judge to identify the next steps necessary for rebuilding the damaged area of the city.



The remains of one of the homes destroyed by the tornado that struck Happy.

A Disaster Declaration was received on Friday, May 10, from Governor Rick Perry, thereby opening the door for ORCA to provide assistance from the Disaster Relief Fund. These funds will allow the community to replace destroyed homes for those who qualify; repair those homes not being repaired by other entities; and conduct final disposal of the approximately 6,000 yards of debris caused by the tornado.

Overall, the ability to leverage local funds and volunteer labor with financial assistance from ORCA is an excellent commentary on the success and speedy recovery that can be had when all parties work together. The combination of efforts from the state, city, and county, as well as local donors, charities, relief organizations, churches, and other public and private entities will ensure that all affected residents are able to resume their normal lives as soon as possible.

Capital Area Retail Attraction

The Community/Economic Development Department of CAPCO is in the process of developing a program that will help rural communities attract retail businesses, in response to numerous requests from communities concerning their desire to attract retail businesses instead of manufacturing companies. The program can be customized and responsive to individual community needs/niches.

The program will consist of customized demographic data, aerial maps, concentric circle maps/analysis, and Dun and Bradstreet lists of targeted retail sectors. Assistance with building presentations, sales training, and travel for communities to help with their community presentation will also be part of the program.

Communities will need to show commitment by organizing a sales team that will be responsible for the marketing part of the plan, including developing and identifying available sites and other resources that will be needed to build a winning community presentation.

It is projected to take approximately six-eight months to complete the main matrix for the program, which will then be tested through a pilot project. Upon completion of the pilot project, the program will be another tool CAPCO can offer communities to address their economic development efforts.

For more information, contact David Partlow, Community/Economic Development Director, CAPCO, 512-916-6045.

Reprinted from TARC News, April 2002, Vol. 1, Official Publication of the Texas Association of Regional Councils.

Orca's Own Hero

Lord Jesus, it's your decision!

Paramedic's heroic effort saved trucker's life; God protected him, he says.

By Bill Modisett, Editor, Monahans News

Al Lewis credits the Lord Jesus with protecting him on April 24 when he walked through a ball of fire and black smoke to pull a man from a burning 18-wheeler on Interstate 20 a few miles east of Monahans.

Recuperating Thursday in a Ward Memorial Hospital bed where he was being treated for smoke inhalation and a second-degree burn to one hand, Lewis retold the story of saving a trucker's life the day before.

Lewis, who works with issues pertaining to rural health for the Office of Rural Community Affairs in Austin, was in the Permian basin to visit several hospitals, and was leaving Monahans to travel to Midland International Airport on Interstate 20 when he suddenly saw a fireball ahead.

As he got closer, Lewis "noticed there was a semi merged with another semi in the westbound lanes, and the truck that had rear-ended the other one was in flames." Lewis quickly parked his car in the median between the eastbound and westbound lanes and ran across the westbound lanes to offer assistance. Lewis is a licensed paramedic.

"Lord," Lewis prayed quickly, "it's your decision. I trust your judgement."

Lewis ran up to the trucks and asked a man standing there if anyone was in the truck. "Yeah," responded the man, "but he's dead."

When Lewis looked through the window of the truck, he saw a man's hands moving around. Lewis tried to open the door to the cab, but it wouldn't open. Then the man he had earlier asked if anyone was still in the truck showed up with a fire extinguisher. Lewis took it from him and tried to break the glass, but it wouldn't break.

He ran around the trucks to the other side and ran through flames to the cab door. At that point, said Lewis, he heard a man in the cab screaming, "I'm burning up! I'm burning up! Help me!"

Closing his eyes to the flames, Lewis smashed the window glass with his hand, reached into the cab, and told the man to grab his hand. When the man responded, Lewis dragged him from the cab, placed him over his shoulder and took a couple of steps. As he did, recalled Lewis, "The whole thing burst into flames."

When the man he had saved told Lewis that his dog was still in the truck, Lewis told him, "Man, I'm not going back in there!"



Flames and billowing black smoke cover the scene of the truck wreck on Interstate 20 April 24 a few miles east of Monahans. (Photo by James Pickett)

Lewis, who weighs 340 pounds and was a bodybuilder at one time, carried Timothy Ray Buster, who weighs 285 pounds, for about 50 feet. He then placed Buster on the tailgate of a pickup parked nearby and began wiping blood away from the trucker's face and checking him for injuries. One of the bystanders loaned Lewis a Buck knife and he cut away the injured man's shirt and pant legs. He also told bystanders to call an ambulance.

One of the people who had stopped at the wreck scene told Lewis, "We saw you walk through fire and black smoke."

Lewis responded, "The hand of the Lord Jesus was on me and He protected me." He showed news representatives his arms, noting not even a hair on them was burned.

Lewis, 36, commended the Ward Memorial Hospital EMS workers, the hospital staff, nurse practitioner and floor staff for "wonderful service" and outstanding care.

Buster, 30, of Fresno, Calif. was taken to Medical Center Hospital in Odessa and was listed in stable condition Monday. Driver of the other truck, Edgardo V. Ingles, 49, of Connecticut was uninjured.

Rescue workers later found Buster's dog injured, but alive in a nearby ditch.

Since the accident, Lewis visited Buster in his hospital room in Odessa.

The accident was investigated by DPS Trooper Jordan Melson of Monahans.

Reprinted with permission.

ORCA Executive Committee Chairman William Jeter presents Al Lewis with a proclamation honoring Lewis' heroism, while Vice Chairman Carol Harrell looks on, at the June 7 ORCA Executive Committee meeting.

Kudos to Ward Memorial Hospital

By Al Lewis, LP, ORCA

The last thing on my mind while working with rural and frontier hospitals and Emergency Medical Service organizations in far west Texas, was to personally experience care as a patient. But on April 24, I had the opportunity to experience first hand how the hospital in Monahans cares for the sick and injured that come through its doors.

I was in west Texas on business for ORCA when I came upon an accident where two semis had collided at a high rate of speed. After pulling the driver from his burning truck, I experienced some difficulty breathing due to inhaling the smoke from the burning wreckage. The paramedics at the scene put me on oxygen and transported me to Ward Memorial Hospital, where I continued to receive the same excellent care.

The staff was kind and attentive to my needs as a patient. I spoke with the nursing staff and was visited by the hospital administrator and the Director of Clinical Services. I felt like a Very Important Person. From the Family Nurse Practitioner who treated me in the ER—and later came to my room to check on me and let me know he was staying at the hospital just in case I started having more difficulty breathing—to the medical doctor whose bedside manner was comforting and conveyed confidence in his medical care, I can honestly say I experienced a level of care and competence comparable to that provided at any urban hospital.

I personally give my heartfelt thanks to the staff and commend the hospital administrator for the outstanding care his employees provided.



Operation Lone Star 2002

Program provides free medical services in underserved area of Texas

By Ann Dewees, ORCA

Operation Lone Star brings together a diverse group of military and civilian personnel to provide free medical services for people in this medically underserved area of the state. Services will be provided on a first-come, first served basis and will include:

- ◆ Dental for adults
- ◆ General medical care
- ◆ Sports physicals
- ◆ Immunizations
- ◆ Diabetic screening
- ◆ High blood pressure screening
- ◆ Pharmacy

Operation Lone Star 2002 runs from July 29 through August 7 at three locations:

- ◆ Betts Elementary School, 2626 South Cesar Chavez Road, Edinburg
- ◆ Chapa Elementary School, 3½ miles north of Doffing Road, La Joya
- ◆ Palm Grove Elementary School, 7942 Southmost, Brownsville

During the service period in 2001, a total of 6,332 people received \$361,195 worth of dental services; \$421,194 worth of medical services; and \$141,000 worth of pharmaceuticals at three locations in Hidalgo County.

In the past, Operation Lone Star operated only in Hidalgo County, but state Senator Eduardo A. "Eddie" Lucio, Jr., of Brownsville, requested that the services also be provided in his home county, Cameron, this year.

The program will be conducted and administered by the Texas Department of Health, the United States Marine Corps Reserve, the United States Navy Reserve, Texas Air National Guard, Texas Army National Guard, the County of Hidalgo, Texas State Technical College, Texas A & M University-South Texas Center, Hidalgo Women Infant Children (W.I.C.) Program, Cameron County Health Department, County of Cameron, Office of the Secretary of State, National Kidney Foundation, and Dentists Who Care, San Antonio College of Dental and Medical Assistants.

For additional information about Operation Lone Star 2002, please contact the Texas Department of Health at 956-423-0130 or toll-free at 800-693-6699.

Colonia Fund Update

By Cynthia Vallejo, ORCA

ORCA's Colonia Fund awards planning and construction grants on a competitive basis for community development projects such as sewer, water and housing rehabilitation to county applicants for projects in unincorporated "eligible colonia" areas. An "eligible colonia" is defined as any identifiable unincorporated community within 150 miles of the Texas/Mexico border lacking a potable water supply; adequate sewage systems; and decent, safe, and sanitary housing; and was in existence as a colonia prior to the date of enactment of the Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act on November 28, 1990.

The Texas Community Development Program (TCDP) Colonia Fund is broken out into four funding categories:

Funding Category	Amount Available for 2002
Colonia Construction Fund	\$6,390,000
Colonia Economically Distressed Areas Program (EDAP) Fund	\$2,000,000
Colonia Planning Fund	\$ 450,000
Colonia Self-help Centers Fund	\$2,210,000

On May 16, 2002, the TCDP unit of the Office of Rural Community Affairs (ORCA) received 55 total applications for the 2002 TCDP Colonia Funding competition: 43 for the Colonia Construction Fund and 12 for the Colonia Planning Fund.

One hundred percent of the population of Willamar, in Willacy County, have a high school or equivalent diploma—the highest percentage of any city in Texas, according to the 2000 US Census.
None of the community's 14 residents has a college degree.

Compliance and Audit Explained

By Jennifer Boyer and Rob Wuest, ORCA

ORCA's Program Compliance and Audit Unit performs monitoring reviews of contracts funded with Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program funds and completes reviews of audits submitted by communities that have received funding from the program. The CDBG Program, referred to as the "Texas Community Development Program" (TCDP), addresses eligible activities for cities with populations under 50,000 and counties under 200,000. Funding for the program is provided by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The monitoring process includes conducting reviews of local records and visual observations of work completed with program funds to ensure compliance with program rules and regulations. Once the visits have been completed and all issues cleared, the monitoring staff documents the closing of the contract. Approximately 300 contracts are monitored annually.

The staff is also responsible for monitoring self-help centers located along the Texas/Mexico border. The self-help centers provide technical assistance, training, public facility improvements, housing assistance, and other self-help activities to assist residents living in impoverished areas known as *colonias*. These centers are funded by the TCDP, but are administered by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) through an agreement with ORCA. Additional oversight responsibilities of the unit include tracking and monitoring of loan and lease payments generated by economic development projects.

The audit review process further documents expenditure of funds and provides an overall review of a community's fiscal controls and financial systems. ORCA's audit resolution staff is responsible for reviewing audits submitted by TCDP program recipients. Recipients are required to submit an Audit Certification Form within 60 days after the fiscal year end, to certify the amount of funds expended during the fiscal year. If \$300,000 or more in state or federal funds are expended during the fiscal year, recipients are required to hire a Certified Public Accountant to prepare a Single Audit. Single Audits include uniform audit requirements for states, local governments, and nonprofit organizations. Single Audits are due within nine months after a recipient's fiscal year end.

The audit staff reviews approximately 180 Single Audit reports annually.

ORCA's Program Compliance and Audit Unit will soon be reviewing files of grant recipients who have been awarded funds from programs administered by ORCA's Rural Health Unit.



ORCA's Program Units

ORCA encompasses three program and service units: Community Development; Outreach and Training Services; and Rural Health.

The **Community Development Unit** addresses community needs with funds provided by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program. Until January of 2002, these programs were administered by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA).

The **Outreach and Training Services (OTS) Unit** routinely administers workshops and publishes resource guides for government officials. Created with the establishment of the Texas Department of Community Affairs in 1971 by Senate Bill 81 as Local Government Services (LGS), OTS is funded by the state's General Revenue. Recently administered under TDHCA, LGS became a part of ORCA in January 2002 and became OTS in April 2002.

The **Rural Health Unit**, originally the Center for Rural Health Initiatives, was created in 1989 during the 71st Legislature. The Center was established to serve as the primary state resource in planning, coordinating, and advocating statewide efforts to ensure continued access to health care services in rural areas. The Center became ORCA's Rural Health Unit in January 2002, in accordance with House Bill 7 of the 77th Legislature.

Community Development Unit

The total federal CDBG Program allocation from HUD is divided into two major categories: Entitlement (for cities over 50,000 and qualifying counties over 200,000 in population) and non-entitlement (for cities under 50,000 in population and counties not eligible for entitlement status). ORCA's Community Development Unit administers the non-entitlement CDBG Program in Texas, referred to as the "Texas Community Development Program."

Texas Community Development Program (TCDP)

The goal of the TCDP is to develop viable communities by providing decent housing and suitable living environments and expanding economic opportunities, principally for persons of low- and moderate-income. Each funded activity must meet one of the following national objectives: 1) principally benefit low- and moderate-income persons; or 2) aid in the elimination of slums or blight; or 3) meet other community development needs of a particular urgency.

Assistance is provided under the following eight funding categories:

- ♦ **Community Development Fund** awards

monies on a competitive basis to address housing and public facility needs such as sewer, water, road, and drainage system improvements.

- ♦ **Disaster Relief/Urgent Need Fund** assists communities on an as-needed basis for recovery from disasters such as floods or tornadoes and urgent water and sewer needs of recent origin (18 months or less) that are unanticipated and pose a serious public safety or health hazard.
- ♦ **Housing Rehabilitation Fund** awards are available through a statewide competitive process for the rehabilitation of existing owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing units and, in strictly limited circumstances, the construction of new housing that is accessible to persons with disabilities.
- ♦ **Housing Infrastructure Fund** awards monies competitively for public facility improvements that support the development of single-family and multi-family housing.
- ♦ **Planning and Capacity Building Fund** awards grants on a competitive basis to communities for planning activities that address public facility and housing needs.
- ♦ **Colonia Fund** awards planning and community development grants on a competitive basis for eligible counties to assist colonia areas located within 150 miles of the Texas/Mexico border. The fund also provides for the operation of seven Self-Help Centers.
- ♦ **Texas Small Towns Environment Partnership (Texas "STEP" Fund)** makes grants available to cities and counties for solving water and sewer problems with a self-help approach that encourages local participation through volunteerism and donated equipment and materials.
- ♦ **Texas Capital Fund** is used to create and retain jobs primarily for low- and moderate-income persons and is administered by the Texas Department of Agriculture through an interagency agreement with ORCA.

Outreach and Training Services (OTS) Unit

OTS provides specialized assistance and training to help local elected officials in small cities and counties, typically those with populations less than 10,000, become more effective at providing public services and resolving administrative, financial, social, and environmental issues in their communities.

Principal efforts involve training for city officials, planning and zoning in connection with the Texas Municipal League and the regional councils; training in setting up and

operating boards of fire commissioners for rural fire prevention districts; training housing authority directors and commissioners; training and assisting with personnel management; and providing information to communities that are considering incorporation as cities.

While OTS focuses primarily on governmental officials in rural areas, staff will respond to requests for information, counseling, or training from local government officials in any community.

- ♦ **Grantsmanship:** ORCA's OTS Unit provides information on available grant funding for rural projects and sponsors. The Unit also sponsors periodic workshops on general grantsmanship.
- ♦ **Workshops:** OTS staff conduct workshops that focus on the responsibilities of public officials and distribute detailed information on issues facing Texas communities.

Rural Health Unit

The charge of the Rural Health Unit is to ensure access to and quality of health care services in rural Texas. To achieve this goal, the Unit facilitates the growth of rural clinics, establishes emergency medical care networks, and encourages healthcare professionals to choose to practice in rural areas.

The Rural Health Unit was created in 1989 by the 71st Legislature as the Center for Rural Health Initiatives (Center). The Center became ORCA's Rural Health Unit in January 2002, in accordance with House Bill 7 of the 77th Legislature. The Center brings to ORCA its federal designation as the Texas State Office of Rural Health.

- ♦ **Capital Improvement Program** provides grants to hospitals in rural counties to make capital improvements to existing health facilities, construct new health facilities, or purchase capital equipment.
- ♦ **Community Healthcare Development** identifies the economic impact of healthcare delivery in a rural county and assists the county in developing and implementing an action plan to optimize access to health care.
- ♦ **Community Healthcare Awareness and Mentoring Program (CHAMPS)** identifies high school students or other residents of rural communities with an interest in health care and matches them with working healthcare professionals (mentors). The students shadow the mentors to learn more about healthcare careers, and receive encouragement and support.
- ♦ **Critical Access Hospital (CAH) Program** is designed to provide an alternative model to allow small rural hospitals to

ORCA Awards \$1 Million to Rural Hospitals

By Jill McFarren, ORCA

ORCA has awarded \$1,003,728 to 11 rural hospitals through the Rural Health Unit's Capital Improvement Loan Fund. The grants are to be used for making capital improvements to existing health facilities, constructing new health facilities, or purchasing capital equipment. The program is designed to assist rural facilities that do not have many funding source options or are often overlooked in other grant awards.

Capital Improvement Loan Fund Awardees

Funds from the Capital Improvement Fund (Matching Grant) are available to eligible rural health facilities to support capital improvements to existing health facilities, construct new health facilities, or to purchase eligible capital equipment.

Hospital	County	Award	Project
Stamford Memorial Hospital	Jones	\$150,000	Replace 33-year-old hospital-wide heating and air conditioning system
Madison St. Joseph	Madison	\$63,221	ER Renovation: adjust for lack of proper triage area & lack of privacy
Titus Regional Medical Center	Titus	\$100,000	Improve Isolation Rooms: Replace 25+-year old Air Handling System with independent exhaust system for all rooms
ETMC-Carthage	Panola	\$99,931	Replace patient beds: Current beds are no longer repairable. New beds will help reduce staff injuries and decrease for bed adjustments.
Goodall-Witcher Healthcare Foundation	Bosque	\$127,316	Replace 30-year-old newborn warmers, and fetal monitors; Purchase additional cardiac monitor; Replace 30-year-old stretchers; Upgrade computer software currently at 98% capacity
Fisher County Hospital District	Fisher	\$127,500	Upgrade 26-year-old Radiographic/Fluoroscopy System to increase image quality and reduce radiation exposure
Palo Pinto County Hospital District	Palo Pinto	\$66,000	Replace 32-year-old unrepairable Autoclave used for sterilizing instruments.

Emergency Grant Awardees

Funds from the Emergency Fund are available to eligible rural health facilities to address eligible facility Life Safety Code issues.

Hospital	County	Award	Project
Lynn County Hospital	Lynn	\$60,000	New sprinkler system hospital-wide (no sprinkler system in place)
Swisher Memorial Hospital	Swisher	\$40,000	Install firewall protection. Extend corridor wall to roof deck
Columbus Community Hospital	Colorado	\$95,760	Installation of emergency oxygen inlet; Fire alarm enhancement to show location of fire; Outside lighting; Install sprinkler system (no sprinkler system in place)
Coleman County Medical Center	Coleman	\$74,000	Move transformers due to city-wide change in voltage.

Applications are typically available from ORCA from late October until the end of July. ORCA mails applications to all rural hospitals in the state in late October/early November and again in the Spring. Applications are due July 31 for the February 1-July 31 cycle, and January 31 for the August 1-January 31 cycle.

Applications for the 2002 Capital Improvement Loan Funds are now available and are due no later than July 31, 2002. Contact ORCA to obtain an application.

Rural Texas covers approximately 80 percent of the state's total land area, encompassing 213,297 of Texas' 267,277 square miles. Rural Texas is larger than Spain and is approximately the size of France.
(American Farmland Trust, Texas Field Office)

Teamwork Produces Positive Results

By Oralia Cardenas, ORCA, and Jeanette Harris, Texas Department of Agriculture

Eastland County and the city of De Leon, in Comanche County, received contract awards under the Texas Community Development Program's Texas Capital Fund (TCF) to support three existing businesses in the area. Team efforts to support Gorman Miller Milling Co., a feed mill; Birdsong Corporation, a peanut processor; and Golden Peanut Company, LLC., a food processor, resulted in the repair of 47 miles of rail line, ultimately saving 122 jobs.

The rail line was in serious disrepair and would have become inoperable if not repaired. For the companies, alternative methods for transporting their products would have been cost prohibitive and would have jeopardized business operations, putting the employees' jobs at risk.

The county and the city applied to the Texas Capital Fund for assistance in repairing the rail line. In 2000, Eastland County received one award for \$750,000 and another for \$500,000 to repair two sections of the rail line. De Leon received a \$750,000 contract award to cover the section of rail line extending through the city. An additional \$4 million dollars was contributed by the affected businesses as matching funds for the project.

TCF provides money for economic development projects that create or retain jobs, primarily for low- and moderate-income persons and is administered through an interagency agreement between ORCA and the Texas Department of Agriculture.

HIPAA Compliance Required by Oct. 16, 2002

If you bill Medicare and won't be ready to transmit standard electronic claims and transactions by October 2002, you must fill out an extension form and submit it to CMS. Even if you have a billing agency, **YOU—the provider—are responsible for submitting an extension for HIPAA transactions compliance, required October 16, 2002.**

Go to <http://www.cms.gov/hipaa> to fill out the compliance plan, submit it electronically, and get an instant confirmation of the extension. **The last day to file is Oct. 15.**

Questions and concerns about HIPAA compliance? Contact Becky Peal-Sconce, Regional Rural Health Coordinator, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Dallas, Texas 214-767-6444, fax 214-767-0323, E-mail: bpealsconce@cms.hhs.gov

Kennedy Ridge Gets Water and Sewer Services

By Cynthia Vallejo, ORCA

Kennedy Ridge, in Travis County, has a population of approximately 400. Although this community is just nine miles outside the city of Austin, the community struggles to attain what most people take for granted—clean drinking water and sanitary sewer.

With assistance from ORCA, Travis County, and a dedicated group of engineers and administrative consultants, Kennedy Ridge is now making that dream come true through the Texas Small Towns Environment Partnership (Texas STEP).

In March 2000, Travis County was awarded a \$350,000 STEP fund grant through the Texas Community Development Program to provide sewer services for the Kennedy Ridge community.

Texas STEP requires more volunteers than paid professionals on site, at least 51 percent. When staff from ORCA met with the residents of Kennedy Ridge for the first time, there was no doubt that this community had not only a desire to solve their water and wastewater problems, but also the capacity to do so. Three backhoe operators were identified at the first meeting alone, as well as dozens of

volunteers for tasks ranging from pipe laying to babysitting to providing meals and drinks for the workers.

The project consisted of installing approximately two miles of wastewater line, five road borings, 72 reconnections, and 25 first-time service connections. Thanks to the persistence of the community and the ingenuity of the engineers, the funding dollars were stretched even farther—to 62 first-time service connections, more than double the proposed amount. The community has only a few more homes to hook up to the wastewater system. The county has already applied and been funded again through ORCA's Community Development Program to provide first-time water services through self-help.

The dedication of this community was noted by the engineers, "Once again, I tip my hat to the volunteer work crew for executing some of the more difficult portions of the construction with relative ease and proficiency," as well as by local legislators.

"I'm happy for the residents of Kennedy Ridge," said State Senator Gonzalo Barrientos. "Most of us assume that clean water is readily available at the tap for all Texans. That hasn't been the case for these folks. Now, a number of government agencies are working together to give these people a helping hand."



Kennedy Ridge volunteers work on installing their new water and sewer systems.

State Representative Dawnna M. Dukes further acknowledged the importance of the funding that will directly address the community's needs. "The Texas STEP program will help to ensure a proper and safe water supply for the residents of Travis County, particularly for Kennedy Ridge, an area in which water system is grossly inadequate," she said. "Water and wastewater demands are directly linked to the overall quality of life for citizens and Texas STEP will enable the county to better meet those needs."

Travis County Judge Biscoe, Commissioner Davis, and all the members of the Commissioner's Court of Travis County deserve recognition for supporting this project.

For more information about this project or Texas STEP, contact ORCA.

Counties in Texas are not responsible for the water and wastewater needs of residents in unincorporated areas of the counties and are not permitted to utilize any type of county funding for these projects. However, they can apply for grant funding on behalf of a community or water supply corporations. They may also provide assistance through grant applications, the loan of equipment, or inspectors for projects.

Border Health News

The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio recently received a first-year grant of \$250,000 from the US Health and Human Services Department (HHS), Health Resources and Service Administration (HRSA). The money will be used to study workforce issues and access to care along the US-Mexico border.

This is the initial investment in a 5-year cooperative agreement to set up a Regional Center for Health Workforce Studies, as part of the Border Health Initiative to improve health care access for the communities in the border region.

The border region is one of the most underserved areas in the nation. If US territory within 100 kilometers (66 miles) of the Mexican border were considered a state, it would rank *last* in access to care, second in hepatitis deaths, and third in diabetes-related deaths. Tuberculosis on the border is six times the national rate and measles and mumps are twice the US average, both of which could be prevented by vaccine. This region also ranks high in lack of health insurance and many residents lack running water and electricity.

The new research center at UT-San Antonio will recognize and research these challenging conditions, as well as, identify the number of health care workers, their disciplines, and their exact locations. They will develop strategies to encourage physicians and other health professionals to serve in these areas of greatest need and work on training needs to ensure culturally-competent and language-proficient providers and increase the retention rate of health care staff at all levels.

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ORCA Recruits Dentists to Practice in Rural Texas

Dentists encouraged to consider practicing in rural Texas

By Robin S. Wright, ORCA

The Texas Dental Association (TDA) had their annual Texas meeting in May in San Antonio. This was the first time that the State Office of Rural Health, ORCA's Rural Health Unit, has been fortunate enough to attend and exhibit. It is very important not to overlook dental health as part of the rural health care system in Texas, and ORCA's exposure to the 11,000 attendees of the TDA meeting should be a good beginning for a positive impact on the dental shortage in rural Texas.

Recruiting dentists and hygienists to rural areas has become a serious problem for many communities in Texas. ORCA is partnering with TDA to increase the access to dental services in these underserved areas. Many dental professionals were interested in loan repayment programs and practice opportunities available for professionals who contract to practice in rural Texas.

ORCA has a new loan repayment program for dentists and dental hygienists called the Rural Communities Health Care Investment Program. Contact ORCA for additional information.

remain viable. Hospitals that meet certain

(Continued on page 19)

(Programs continued from page 16)

federal and state criteria may qualify for the CAH designation, which allows for increased service and staffing flexibility and increased reimbursement from Medicare.

- ◆ **Grants Resources** provides information on available grant funding for rural health projects, conducts grant application workshops, and provides assistance in completing grant applications. ORCA has been designated the local technical assistance office for Outreach and Networking grants.
- ◆ **Health Careers Promotion Program** is designed to encourage rural high school students to pursue higher education in health care careers and work in rural Texas communities. The program provides information to rural high school students, teachers, and counselors about healthcare careers, educational programs, and financial aid sources in Texas.
- ◆ **Medically Underserved Community-State Matching Incentive Program (MUC-SMIP)** administers matching funds to eligible medically underserved communities to cover start-up costs for contracted physicians to establish primary care practices. The funds, from \$15,000 to \$25,000 per year, per applicant, must be used to establish a primary care physician's office and ancillary facilities for diagnosing and treating patients.
- ◆ **Outstanding Rural Scholar Recognition Program (ORSRP)** is designed to assist rural communities in "growing their own" health care professionals by matching community funds with state funds to support a student of the community's choice in a health professional education program. Fifty percent of the student's education expenses are contributed by the sponsoring rural community and the remainder is provided by ORCA's Rural Health Unit. For each year the student receives funds through the program, the student provides a year of health care in the sponsoring rural community.
- ◆ **Rural Communities Healthcare Investment Program (RCHIP)** is designed to attract and retain healthcare professionals in rural communities by providing incentives such as stipends or loan repayment assistance to non-physician healthcare professionals who agree to practice in medically underserved areas.
- ◆ **Rural EMS** works with other state agencies to ensure the provision of the highest quality rural pre-hospital emergency medical services in rural Texas through existing and developing programs.
 - Rural Scholarship Incentive Program offers rural EMS providers and communities a matching grant of up

Register today to attend
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is the annual healthcare job fair where representatives from rural Texas communities and healthcare professionals meet face-to-face to discuss practice opportunities.

*For additional information,
 contact Robin Wright at ORCA.
 E-mail: rwright@orca.state.tx.us*



Registration deadline is August 20, 2002

to \$2,000 for each candidate, applicable toward the cost of advanced training for certified EMT and EMT-Intermediate candidates.

— Rural EMS Flex Grant Program provides funding for Critical Access Hospitals to purchase training equipment and/or provide certification/recertifications courses for emergency medical staff.

- ◆ **Rural Flexibility Grant Program** bolsters fragile rural health services through network development. The goals of this grant include: development of a statewide rural health plan; conversion of small rural hospitals to Critical Access Hospital (CAH) designation; development of rural health networks associated with CAH's; integration and strengthening of rural emergency medical systems; and improving healthcare services for rural populations.
- ◆ **Rural Health Clinic Assistance** includes technical assistance workshops cosponsored with the Texas Association of Rural Health Clinics. Workshop topics have included assisting communities in starting a clinic and addressing the concerns of established clinics.
- ◆ **Rural Hospital Designation**, a procedure for designating a hospital as "rural" in order for the facility to qualify for federal funds, is administered by ORCA.
- ◆ **Rural Physician Assistant Loan Reimbursement Program (PALRP)** provides school loan reimbursements to physician assistants who practice in eligible underserved communities. Funding for this program comes from PA licensure fees collected by the Texas State Board of Medical Examiners.
- ◆ **Texas Health Service Corps Program (THSCP)** offers up to \$15,000 per year as incentive to primary care physicians

in their residency to establish practices in medically underserved communities.

- ◆ **Texas PRAIRIE DOC Recruitment and Retention Program** assists rural communities in the development, recruitment, and retention of primary care healthcare professionals. The comprehensive Texas Physician Recruitment And Integrated Retention Extending Docs Out to Communities is also designed to help healthcare professionals locate job, loan repayment, and scholarship opportunities in rural Texas.
 - Recruitment Assistance includes ORCA's participation in two internet-based healthcare provider recruitment efforts, 3-R-Net and Texas PracticeSites. The programs allow communities to recruit on internet web sites as well as allowing practitioners to make their availability known.
 - Locum Tenens Healthcare Professional Registry is a no-charge registry of healthcare professionals who are interested in providing temporary services to rural Texas communities when the resident physicians need to be away from their busy practices. This service allows patients to have continuous access to medical care in their communities, and rural physicians are better able to maintain their skills and motivation.
 - HealthFind is an annual healthcare job fair that provides rural Texas communities and healthcare professionals the opportunity to meet face-to-face and explore practice opportunities. The event allows small communities to market themselves to these practitioners, and vice-versa, without the time and expense of the usual recruiting/application procedures.

For additional information on any of these

CMA Proposes Rule Changes to Ease Burdens on Rural Hospitals

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMA) has proposed a new rule for fiscal 2003 that would provide significant benefits to rural hospitals and reduce regulatory burdens, according to the agency.

If the rule is finalized as proposed, aggregate payments to rural hospitals are projected to increase by 1.7 percent more than the average increase for all hospitals.

Key provisions in the proposed rule include changing hospital reimbursements; expanding treatment quotas; and streamlining compliance. The proposed rule also addresses complex wage-index labor issues.

For more information on this proposal, check the Federal Register, 3/9 pp 31403-31689.

Excerpted from the Community Health Funding Report, May 23, 2002. For a complimentary copy of the Funding Report, call 800-866-6380.

Of the 2,004 incorporated cities in Texas, 1,720 or 86 percent have fewer than 10,000 residents. Another 210 have fewer than 50,000.
(2002-2003 Texas Almanac, Mary G. Ramos, Editor)

(Continued on page 20)
(Webb, continued from page 9)

Development Board for a regional sewer treatment plant. From the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC), the county has received funds to establish a code enforcement pilot program. To augment the code enforcement program, the county applied to the TNRCC for an environmental investigator to address illegal dumping.

Since 1995, the county has successfully received in excess of \$100 million in funding and committed over \$13 million in matching funds for projects from sources other than the TCDP.

The county continues to explore funding opportunities to address the needs of its residents. For more information and creative ways to access various funding opportunities, contact Webb County's Economic Development Department at 956-718-8602.

(Tips, continued from page 9)

10. **Deliberate Transition of Power to a Younger Generation of Leaders:** People under 40 regularly hold key positions in civic and business affairs.
11. **Acceptance of Women in Leadership Roles:** Women are elected officials, plant managers, and entrepreneurial developers.
12. **Strong Belief in and Support for Education:** Good schools are the norm and centers of community activity.
13. **Problem-Solving Approach to Providing Health Care:** Health care is considered essential, and smart strategies are in place for diverse methods of delivery.
14. **Strong Multi-Generational Family Orientation:** The definition of family is broad, and activities include younger as well as older generations.
15. **Strong Presence of Traditional Institutions that are Integral to Community Life:** Churches, schools and service clubs are strong influences on community development and social activities.
16. **Sound and Well-Maintained Infrastructure:** Leaders work hard to maintain and improve streets, sidewalks, water systems, and sewage facilities.
17. **Careful Use of Fiscal Resources:** Frugality is a way of life and expenditures are considered investments in the future.
18. **Sophisticated Use of Information Resources:** Leaders access information that is beyond the knowledge base available in the community.
19. **Willingness to Seek Help from the Outside:** People seek outside help for community needs, and many compete for government grants and contracts for economic and social programs.
20. **Conviction that, in the Long Run, You Have to Do It Yourself:** Thriving rural communities believe their destiny is in their own hands. Making their communities good places is a pro-active assignment, and they willingly accept it.

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(Indigent care, continued from page 8)

"Every year when the new federal poverty income levels come out, the Texas Department of Health puts out the new income charts for those who can qualify for indigent care," explained Imelda Natera, secretary for the hospital district. "The maximum that the district can go beyond the federal poverty levels is 50 percent."

Mary Baker is the community health coordinator for Big Bend Regional Medical Center and works closely with the hospital district. It's her job to oversee the applications for indigent care at the hospital. Patients who previously made too much money to qualify for the indigent program may now fit within the guidelines. "I'm hoping this will catch people with no kids in their households that can't qualify for Medicaid. This should help the older population that really needs it," she explained.

The hospital district collects about \$500,000 in tax dollars each year that are earmarked specifically for indigent care. The district works with the administration of the Big Bend Regional Medical Center to disburse the funds and offer services to the poor.

Adapted from an article by Sterry Butcher in International Presidio Paper, Presidio, TX.

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