



# NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 12, 2007

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## **Starr County receives \$1.2 million for Colonia Self-Help Center**

*TDHCA award to assist 8,000 households living in five colonias*

(AUSTIN) — The quality of life for approximately 8,000 Starr County colonia residents may soon brighten through the assistance of the Starr County Self-Help Center, which today received a \$1.2 million contract from the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA). The contract award, made through TDHCA's Colonia Self-Help Center (SHC) Program, will help the county provide a wide range of housing related services designed to improve living conditions in five colonias.

The Starr County SHC will serve Casita/Garciasville, Camargito, La Puerta, Refugio, and West Alto Bonito colonias and is staffed by five full time county employees. TDHCA estimates that 8,024 residents will receive assistance through this Colonia SHC Program contract.

“We recognize that many colonia residents must face and overcome enormous obstacles just to meet the most basic of housing needs,” noted Michael Gerber, TDHCA Executive Director. “By partnering with the county, the Department is helping these residents build or repair their homes and obtain the skills they need to improve their lives. The self-help nature of this program reflects the ‘can-do’ spirit of the people and region, as well as helping maximize the state’s resources.”

TDHCA has contracted with the county to rehabilitate 50 homes to bring them up to US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Colonia Housing Standards, provide 90 residents with plumbing skills, present construction skill training workshops for 100 residents, remove junked automobiles and other solid waste, and to perform community outreach.

Starr County staff will administer the county Self-Help Center but will also subcontract with local nonprofit organizations to provide non-administrative services such as home rehabilitation and construction classes.

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The Colonia SHC Program was created by the Texas legislature in 1995 to assist very low income individuals and families finance, refinance, construct, improve, or maintain a safe, suitable home in a designated colonia service area.

In accordance with state law, the Department established self-help centers in Cameron/Willacy, El Paso, Hidalgo, Starr, and Webb counties. In 2001, TDHCA opened two additional Colonia Self-Help Centers serving Maverick and Val Verde counties to address the needs of colonia residents living in these locations.

Funding for TDHCA's Colonia Self-Help Centers comes from HUD's Community Development Block Grant Program allocation to the State of Texas.

**About The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs**

*The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs is Texas' lead agency responsible for affordable housing, community and energy assistance programs, and colonia activities. The Department annually administers funds in excess of \$400 million, the majority of which is derived from mortgage revenue bond financing and refinancing, federal grants, and federal tax credits.*