COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SUCCESS STORIES

http://www.trdc.org/success.html

* Anson
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* Stephenville
* Throckmorton
* Televideo
* Tolar
* West Columbia

ASSISTING COMMUNITIES TO IDENTIFY AND ACHIEVE COMMUNITY-WIDE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Improving rural community-based assessment is a key priority for the Texas Rural Development Council and is the central focus of its Rural Resource Teams. Resource Teams, organized in partnership with the Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Councils, Councils of Government, USDA-Rural
Development, Community Builders with Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and County Extension Agents, are designed specifically for rural Texas communities and bring professionals with expertise in various areas of community development together to provide on-site assessments of individual communities. Resource Team assessment includes listening to the voices of all members of the community, recommending starting points for development that address the community’s specific needs, and providing long-term support for the achievement of community goals. The Resource Team’s visit creates a forum for rallying unity among the community’s citizens and its report gives communities a better position from which to recruit new businesses, retain existing businesses, and to become eligible for grants for community improvement. This report is unbiased and non-political; it has no preconceived outcomes and continues to be relevant regardless of changes in city government. In return for these services, the local community coordinates the Resource Team listening sessions and provides lodging and meal accommodations for team members during their four-day visit to the community.

The following portfolio of stories tracks the progress of the communities that have participated in Resource Team visits to date. To find out more about TRDC Resource Team visits, contact Cheryl Hinckley at (512) 323-6515 or trdc@onr.com.

Communities

ANSON, TEXAS "The Crossroads of West Texas and Life is Too Short Not to Live in Anson."

Last update: 6/00

Anson participated in a Resource Team visit in January 1997. Anson continues to work with state agencies and private citizens to secure resources for improvements to the community. The city continues to focus on quality of life and beautification issues and has followed up with the needs identified by the Resource Team.

Creation of new park space was identified as Anson’s top priority. Community leaders are meeting with Texas Parks and Wildlife officials to create an improved city park. The city has been awarded a $500,000 matching grant by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Once Anson has raised their $500,000 portion, the grant will match with a $500,000 award for a total of $1,000,000 in parkland monies.

Another continuing project is the building of the town library. Anson is
looking forward to the grand opening of the library that is scheduled later this summer. While plans are nearing completion of the materials inside the building, the community has focused on the area outside the new library. The $5,000 grant Anson received for economic and community development by Wal-Mart's American Hometown Leaders Program to recognize Tom Isbell, was used to create the community garden adjacent to the library.

Housing was also identified as an area to focus on during the Resource Team visit. A concerted effort has taken place to rehabilitate older houses in the area. Anson is also working with the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs and developers to create new housing and apartments in the area.

Anson has continued the "Clean Up Our Square" project. The Texas Department of Transportation has approved plans to improve streets and sidewalks around the courthouse. The project should be completed in 2001. With the improvements, it is expected that Anson will be able to expand cleanup efforts around the city. Anson is recruiting new businesses and believes that all of these cleanup and improvement efforts in the downtown area will make attracting new businesses to the city easier.

The Anson community has a good balance of continuing ongoing projects and creating new projects for the city. With the opening of the new library and the upcoming street and sidewalk improvements to the downtown area, Anson residents have much to look forward to.

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Baird participated in a Resource Team visit in August 1998. The visit resulted in more interest from citizens about community development and
stimulated awareness of community needs and assets among a larger cross-section of the population.

Although there has been some frustration about the lack of manpower available to take on projects and coordinate efforts, in April of this year the Development Corporation of Baird met to prioritize the list of recommendations from the Resource Team. They determined responsible groups in the community to oversee each of the top 5 recommendations to be addressed.

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BREMOND, TEXAS

Last update: 6/00

Bremond participated in a Resource Team visit in January 1999. They have continued to focus their efforts on identified goals while working on new projects through committees.

Committees have been formed and monthly meetings are held in the areas of Economic Development, Education, Government Services, and Quality of Life to work on projects. In addition to the monthly meetings, committee leaders meet quarterly to update the entire group about specific projects.

This year, committees and members of the Big 8 RC&D and Entergy have been working to secure funds for the city library. In April, the city received a $21,000 grant for library equipment from the Toker Foundation. Committees are currently working to try and secure additional parkland for city parks. Bremond continues to work on the street repair program. Streets have been prioritized on the basis of need. Downtown streets and neighborhood streets that have been
prioritized as needing repairs will be repaired this summer.

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CAMPWOOD, TEXAS

Last update: 8/00

Camp Wood participated in a Resource Team visit in June 1998. Camp Wood residents have continued their work and made many improvements since the Resource Team visit.

The community had started a recycling program for residents. They have built upon this program and the recycling program has expanded to accept scrap metal. Newells Salvage volunteered to collect scrap metal, junk cars, and old metal from designated drop off sites. Camp Wood will save additional landfill space due to this recycling effort that is set to start collecting materials this summer.

Additionally, the water improvement project is underway. A new water storage tank is being built and the city is working toward replacing water pipes throughout the city.

In addition to the public works and infrastructure projects, Camp Wood has focused on projects relating to the service industry. Tourism is an important industry to Camp Wood. This year, the Chamber of Commerce sent a representative to attend the Texas Hospitality Workshop to learn about ways that the city can increase the number of visitors to the area.

The diverse projects that Camp Wood has successfully undertaken are an attribute to the activeness and leadership of the Camp Wood community. The channels opened during the Resource Team visit are part of the
reason for the city's success. Additionally, improved communication and unity with in the community continue to be cited as benefits of the Resource Team visit two years ago.

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CENTERVILLE, TEXAS

Last update: 8/00

Centerville participated in a Resource Team visit from February 29-March 2nd 2000. The city is involved in numerous projects.

This year marks the 150th birthday of Centerville. During the July 4th holiday, the city had a sesquicentennial celebration. Nancy Kiker said, "It was one of the biggest celebrations ever. Residents were united as a team." Positive teamwork helped make the celebration a success.

The Friends of Fort Boggy State Park, was a group created to promote tourism and help generate funds for park improvements. Don Johnson is the Chairman of the twelve-person committee. The group is considering setting up a gift shop and RV Park in the park.

Centerville residents have also begun discussions on a strategic plan. A town hall meeting will be held later this summer to work on the strategic plan.

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CLIFTON, TEXAS

Last update: 6/00

Clifton participated in a Resource Team visit in May 1999. The city has since developed a strategic plan. The plan outlines the vision and objectives that were prioritized by the community. Additionally, a task force has been created to work on meeting the objectives.

In addition to the strategic plan, Clifton community leaders have had a number of accomplishments in the past year. Plans are underway for a miniature golf course. They have also cleaned up one of the buildings that had been identified on the Resource Team visit. To pursue housing recommendations, Clifton has inventoried and assessed the cities housing stock.

Clifton residents continue to participate in trainings to further develop their skills. In the past year, they have attended economic development trainings during the Texas Rural Development Council's annual meeting.

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COLEMAN, TEXAS

Last update: 1/00

The last Resource Team of 1999 took place in Coleman Texas on September 15-17, 1999. To date (September 30, 1999) the community has not received the written Resource Report that follows the visit but according to Mary Griffis, Executive Director for the Coleman Chamber of Commerce, people have begun to think about the recommendations that the resource team members made at the town hall meeting. There is an increased interest in the Keep Coleman Beautiful Project that was begun just before the Resource Team Visit.
For More information regarding Coleman please Contact Mary Griffis at the Chamber of Commerce.
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COMANCHE, TEXAS

Last update: 8/00

Comanche participated in a Resource Team visit in February 1999. The city continues to cite successes stories on a variety of economic and educational projects.

Comanche recently submitted an application to the Texas Enterprise and Reinvestment Zone. They have been working on this application in hopes of being recognized by the state so that they can apply for certain businesses. Comanche leaders also believe that they will benefit with housing and other business projects if the application is approved. In July, they received the good news that the community has been awarded the Enterprise Zone designation. Harold Smith from the Economic Development Corporation said they were, “thrilled” to receive this seven year designation.

Another accomplishment is that the community has access to more educational opportunities. Adult continuing education classes were identified as a need of the community. In the past year, residents have the opportunity to take new classes including English speaking training classes. Comanche received a Texas Workforce Commission grant for $385,000. This money will be used to train workers in the four industries in De Leon and Comanche. Additionally, the Comanche Industrial Foundation is setting up a computer center. The T1 lines have been installed and they are still working on creating the public audio/video lab.

While the community certainly has pursued a variety of projects and they are seeing the benefits of their efforts, they continue to start new projects. One future project that has been identified is investigating the effects of a Historic Main Street type program for the community.
CROSS PLAINS, TEXAS "A Caring Community"

Last update: 8/00

Cross Plains participated in a Resource Team visit in February 1998. The community continues to work on projects that were identified during the team visit.

The Cross Plains Area Housing Initiative, Inc. (CPAHI) works towards "upgrading and improving existing housing, as well as, making available new housing in the Cross Plains area." This organization received grant and loan funds from USDA Rural Develop to help meet the housing needs of the community.

Additionally, the Cross Plains Economic Development Council (EDC) developed many new programs designed to contribute to the area. Through matching grants, the EDC encourages storeowners to upgrade and improve their buildings. The grants can be used to improve storefronts and/or signage. Consequently the area looks nicer and business owners receive encouragement and financial support to improve the outside appearance of properties. Grants can be given up to $250 per business and to date the EDC has awarded almost $4000 to twenty businesses.

Cross Plains will host the 2nd Annual Barbarian Festival on Labor Day (September 2nd). Conan the Barbarian author Robert E. Howard lived and wrote his yarns in Cross Plains. The festival was created upon suggestions by the Resource Team report. In 1998, the Texas Commission on the Arts awarded Cross Plains a grant for $498 to help promote the Howard House as a cultural tourist destination. Citizens and Chamber of Commerce participants have been active this year designing the programs and promoting this event. This year's festivities include a parade, food, trades day, and lots of fun for the entire family.

For more information:
In September of 1997, the South Texas community of Crystal City hosted a Resource Team. The goal of the visit was to cooperate with various citizen groups within Crystal City in order to formulate ideas and an agenda for overall municipal improvements and beautification. Not even a year has passed, and the results of the joint effort speak for themselves. Crystal City's former City Manager, Miguel Delgado, expressed feelings of optimism and excitement about the new "momentum" which has taken hold in his town. He believes that the current wave of city renewal is only the beginning.

Since the meeting with the Texas Rural Development Council, the citizens of Crystal City have started The Crystal City Historical Foundation whose main objective is to restore the World War II Internment Camp that is now a local monument. At its peak, the Internment Camp housed 3,326 prisoners of Japanese, German, and Italian ancestry. In November of 1997, the community of Crystal City organized a pilgrimage of ex-internees to visit their former prison. Some surviving ex-POWs came from as far away as Hawaii to commemorate their experiences. To add a more joyful element to the occasion, Crystal City hosted the pilgrimage in conjunction with its annual Spinach Festival, a lively celebration of the area's agricultural heritage. Currently, the Crystal City Historical Foundation is in the process of applying for state funds in order to continue its work.

In terms of infrastructure and engineering upgrades, Crystal City has
made incredible progress since the visit with the TRDC Resource Team. The CDBG program has provided the city with a new fire station complete with a new fire truck. Also, the city is now focusing on projects to re-cover sewer manholes, sanitize and refurbish groundwater tanks, and also to replace 32 fire hydrants throughout the city. The city also appropriated an additional forty acres of land for its municipal waste management facility. Crystal City is right now in the midst of applying for state assistance in bringing sewage treatment to areas that are not currently served. These improvements are really drastic when one considers both the short span of time and the small population of the area.

The economic sector of Crystal City has also received a boost. The city contacted high school alumni and appealed to them to either locate some of their businesses in Crystal City, or at least recommend Crystal City as a place that business contacts of theirs could locate their businesses. The city was successful in getting an alumnus to bring a new business to Crystal City. A tire recapping company recently purchased commercial property in Crystal City in order to set up a factory that is projected to employ 16 to 26 people, depending on the firm's production demands and orders. It is expected that this will stimulate both local residents and outside firms to consider the economic potential that Crystal City holds.

Crystal City is participating in a unique rehabilitation program for local prison inmates. Rather than idling in their cells, the city and the Crystal City Correctional Center have designated a program in which prisoners participate in cleaning up the downtown. Activities in which the inmates participate include curb painting, tree and shrub trimming, and litter collection.

The people of Crystal City made a decision to invest in the future of their community. In a recent bond issue vote, the citizens adopted a resolution that raises the school tax by fifteen percent! This is truly a financial sacrifice given that Zavala County, Texas has a high unemployment rate coupled with a low per capita income. Higher education too has benefited substantially. The Zavala County Bank donated property and a building to house Southwest Texas Junior College, where classes commenced in January of 1998. Socially, a local church has begun a counseling program for the community that addresses issues such as drug abuse, teen pregnancy, and other problems.

Working alongside the Texas Rural Development Council, the people living in and around Crystal City have been helped to help themselves build a
After working with a Texas Rural Development Council Resource Team in May 1997, the City of De Leon embarked on a course of positive change that shows no signs of stopping any time soon. The De Leon 2000 Committee is working diligently to turn the suggestions made in the Resource Team Report into actions and accomplishments.

Before any improvements made by De Leon, there was excellent planning done. The City Council took the right steps to put the infrastructure in place for a working committee. They appointed seven locals that would bring a broad aspect of what improvements needed to be made. The named of this newly found committee is "Develop De Leon Today" (DDT). After DDT was established, Comanche County Telephone Co. gave a small grant to the committee to start operations of a business office. With a business office in place, De Leon applied and was approved for a 501© 3 Tax Exempt Status making it possible to apply for grant monies.

The projects that followed the Resource Team visit were working with TXDOT personnel and office to apply for a grant to restore their old MKT Railway Depot, and the future project will be to develop a park out of a vacant lot. Following the report from the Resource Team, the Chamber of Commerce requested an evaluation team from the Texas Historical Commission to visit De Leon and they were very supportive of the idea. Another project that De Leon put into action dealt with abandoned cars. De Leon donated several abandoned vehicles to a non-profit organization that came to De Leon and removed them free of charge.

A continued success is, The Peach and Melon Festival. This festival draws 30,000 people to De Leon every year. One of the Festival's highlights is the Spanish Dance, which ties De Leon's rich Hispanic heritage into the festivities.

While De Leon was in the process of working together for the betterment of their community, leadership growth and development played a huge part
since the Resource Team visit. These two important characteristics have worked in their favor. The budget for TXDOT will be used for new sidewalks in town, gutters, and curbs, and the September 2001 budget, HUD, will be used to upgrade substandard housing for citizens that live and own a home, but are not able to keep repairs and upkeep of them. The Community Improvement Grant will be used to make a study of the water situation in the city and surrounding communities.

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DUBLIN, TEXAS

Last update: 1/00

Dublin participated in a Resource Team visit in March 1999. They have just begun the process of organization and prioritization of their development strategies. Dublin’s first step was to hire a Director of Economic Development and Planning for the city. The Director will play a key role in Dublin’s progress, as it begins to prioritize and implement its goals. More recently, the city has begun holding a series of strategic planning meetings. These meetings are designed to set goals for the community and to lay the foundation for Dublin’s future growth.

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Ronnie Boston
EARLY, TEXAS

Last update: 8/00

Early participated in a Resource Team visit in November 1995. Early citizens have worked on a number of projects. Executive Director of the Early Economic Development Corporation Quincy Ellis explains that there has been a dramatic change to the city infrastructure and the community looks great!

Early's Small Business Incubator Facility has received nationwide attention for providing an environment for young companies to grow and develop during the critical start-up period. In addition to housing businesses, the incubator provides financial, business, and technical support. The success of the incubator was highlighted in a Washington Post article this spring. Ellis explained "This is now a $1 million facility. It stands all by itself as a model for the business incubation process. Its total impact last year was approximately $7.5 million." In April the incubator celebrated its fourth anniversary.

Other community successes include cleaning up and improving the signage around the community, increasing chamber of commerce membership, and with the assistance of TxDOT, building curbs and gutters along Early Boulevard. The city also has plans to expand infrastructure to the city's Business Development Center in hopes to recruit additional business and industry.

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GOLIAD, TEXAS "REMEMBER THE ALAMO! REMEMBER GOLIAD!"

Lydia Lopez Friedmann, Director for the Goliad County Economic Development Office in Goliad comments to the TRDC Executive Director in her letter dated September 2, 1997 on why rural communities need to be involved in the Texas Rural Development Council.

Dear Cheryl,

Thank you for your call requesting a short update regarding the issues discussed at the 1996 TRDC Rural Issues Conference in Goliad. Please call me if you require more detailed information on any of the developments noted below.

The 1996 TRDC/Goliad Issues Conference was a tremendous success. Over 25 locals attended the meeting, gaining invaluable information and insight on housing, business retention and expansion, drought relief, and infrastructure. Although all of the information shared has proven to be very useful, the most effective information delivered was regarding drought relief. The contacts made at the conference shared information about programs created specifically for recovering communities like Goliad. As local ranching families recover, this type of assistance has brought along creativity. One of the new, popular, and profitable crops surrounding the pastures today is sunflowers. In addition, housing and infrastructure plans have progressed immensely as the community continues to work with TRDC contacts.

Although the July 1996 conference was a great success, the TRDC's impact on Goliad County has been immeasurable since 1995. The direct relationship built with the 3000 + person rural development network connected with the TRDC since 1993 has been the key to the economic development successes Goliad has celebrated in the past two years. My personal relationship with key TRDC contacts and decision-makers made the successes much more attainable. Since 1995, the TRDC network has played a major role in the following projects: attracting the new 75 employee La Quinta Reservation Center, Leadership Goliad, Housing Developments, Main Street Goliad, development of the tourism industry, passing the half cent sales tax and the creation of the official Goliad web site. Thank you TRDC! My copy of the TRDC database is worth its weight in gold! Remember the Alamo! Remember Goliad! Sincerely, M. Lydia
Lopez Friedmann, Director

July 1, 1998 Update - even more successful projects have been reported:

* Goliad Interpretive Master Plan - we have initiated a partnership between the Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas History Commission and Presidio La Bahia to create a better interpretation for Goliad County History and marketing plan for heritage tourism.
* Heritage Tourism Mass Marketing Campaign - A marketing campaign has been created by this office to attract the heritage tourism dollar. This is assisted by the Goliad Interpretive Master Plan consultants.
* Leadership Goliad - We have started our second year.
* Historical Commission Main Street Program - Accepted as a Main Street City
* Planned 1999 Expansion of La Quinta Reservation Center
* Southwestern Bell Economic Excellence Grant - Received for custom-made highway signage made of limestone and wrought iron.
* Seven new small businesses started this year!

You may contact The City of Goliad at (512) 645-3540 Fax: (512) 645-3541 e-mail: gedc@icsi.net Homepage: www.goliad.org

HEARNE, TEXAS- “The Sunflower Capital Located at the Crossroads of Texas"

Last update: 1/00

In November of 1993, both the City of Hearne and the TRDC were newcomers on the Rural Development scene. Each entity stood a lot to learn from the other. Since the visit of the Resource Team, the citizens of Hearne have worked tirelessly to improve their community and the rural areas of Robertson County that surround it. Hearne was plagued by a fragmented and splintered population that could only agree to disagree on how the community needed to govern itself and progress.

After working alongside the TRDC Resource Team, a common goal was established and the fruits of hard labor began to ripen. First "H.O.P.E" (Hearne's Opportunities Progressing Effectively) was started. This organization was formed by citizens of Hearne with the support of the
Hearne City Council. It is dedicated to fostering growth and development in Hearne. Also the local Economic Development Corporation was re-established with the purpose of seeking grants and other funding for projects on a municipal level.

The city applied for, and received, a $250,000.00 grant from the Texas Department of Transportation to restore the Hearne Railroad Depot, an historic structure that will house railroad memorabilia and articles found in the World War II era prison camp that is located outside of town. Hearne’s connection to the railroad is not entirely in the past, Union Pacific Railroad has expanded its operation and is constructing a new office building in Hearne.

The community also began to stress the importance of attracting tourists and prioritizing community cleanliness. It was from this effort that the Hearne Downtown Beautification project was conceived, and the city now directs two citywide clean-ups per year. Along with assembling an organization that focuses on downtown cleanliness, the Hearne City Council designated the downtown area as an arts district. The City of Hearne has without a doubt turned an ordinary paint job into an artistic masterpiece by painting over 23 downtown buildings and planting trees along corners complete with park benches. New streetlights cast a soft glow on the downtown and they will also illuminate the new murals that are planned to portray the area’s rich history.

Solid waste management and other disposal issues often pose formidable challenges to communities of limited resources, but Hearne has met the challenge head-on by implementing weekly curbside recycling and addressing the problems that surround the landfill while at the same time continuing to improve sewage and wastewater treatment facilities. All of these actions are going on despite the fact that the city has lowered commercial utility rates by 2 cents/kilowatt hour. Local residents are hoping that these development will attract more visitors and give them a chance to take advantage of the new 124 room motel that will open in early 1999, or if they prefer, they can spend a good, old-fashioned night at one of the two new bed-and-breakfasts that just opened their doors in Hearne.

Hearne is reaching out to the world and the 4000 feet of newly paved runway at the Hearne Municipal Airport are a sign of smoother times to come. Texas A&M University has sent a team of archaeologists to excavate the World War II Prisoner of War Camp that is in the area. This living piece of history still draws visitors from former Axis countries who were held there. Hearne is not stopping to bask in the glow of its
achievements, work is continuing at a feverish pace. The people of Hearne expect good things to come out of their driven efforts, and good things are precisely what await the visitor to the Sunflower Capital of Texas, Hearne.

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HONEY GROVE, TEXAS

Last update: 7/00

Honey Grove participated in a Resource Team visit in January 2000. Honey Grove residents have been planning ways to implement recommendations suggested by the Resource Team.

The 2020 Vision board has been very active in organizing a planning and strategy meetings. Using the Resource Team report as a basis for discussion, the board has called for a town hall meeting August 31st. In addition, a joint city council/school board/Chamber of Commerce group will be very involved for the planning of this meeting. Community members look forward to outlining future successes after the town hall meeting.

In addition to the vision committee, the community is excited about potential projects and improvements in town. Lots of activity is occurring in the downtown area. Historic street lights are being installed around the town square. One additional accomplishment is that the Honey Grove Honey Company will place honey in all the town’s antique shops. Another antique store has opened in a recently renovated building.
downtown. Finally, the community is looking into setting up a local film commission in preparation for working with the Texas Film Commission to get Honey Grove identified and listed as a potential movie location in Texas.

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JASPER, TEXAS

Last update: 1/00

Jasper participated in a Resource Team visit in July 1999. Since then, Jasper residents have worked on economic projects and on projects that encourage recreational tourism to the area.

Planning efforts continue by residents to discuss how Sandy Creek Park can be expanded and improved. Several committees are studying the issues that were identified during the planning process last year. Construction has begun on the Sam Rayburn Lakes area pavilion. This facility will be used during bass fishing tournaments and for community activities.

The Circle of Peace Foundation was created to promote peace and harmony among all East Texas citizens. The community is raising money to purchase the Circle of Peace sculpture that will be located in the park. This has been a community wide effort. Even rival high schools Silsbee and Kirbyville are working together on this project. After visiting and
seeing the community pride, Sculptor Gary Price, has agreed to donate an additional sculpture to the area each year.

In addition to park related issues, committees have been set up to work on issues such as downtown revitalization, marketing and promoting the area, and increasing the availability of affordable housing and loan funds to local residents. Construction of the Jasper Higher Education and Technology Center has begun. The community looks forward to the opening for classes in Spring 2001. The youth in the community have taken an active role in getting their opinions and suggestions heard. They created a Youth Advisory Panel that regularly meets to discuss issues and plans services projects. They also meet with the Jasper City Council monthly.

The Jasper Economic Development Corporation recently hired a new Executive Director.

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JAYTON, TEXAS

Last update: 5/00

Jayton participated in a Resource Team visit in April 1997. The Team continues to have a positive impact on the community, as ideas suggested in its report continue to be referred to and implemented as Jayton moves forward in its development.

After the Resource Team’s visit, the Kent County Enhancement Program was formed. It has received a state charter and has been designated a
non-profit organization, allowing the group to apply for funds to be used for the benefit of Jayton and outlying areas. A staff member responsible for grant writing and community development was hired after money was appropriated as a result of a meeting with the Kent County Commissioner’s Court.

The Kent County Enhancement Program has already implemented an impressive number of projects. New businesses--a day care and two restaurants--have been recruited. The Program has joined Texas Midwest Community Network (TMCN) for promotion and access to training and business leads.

Kent County will have an exhibit at the Western Heritage Celebration in Abilene May, 2000, in conjunction with TMCN. Kent County also has a page in the TMCN Marketing Brochure. The Brochure is substituted throughout the United States.

Resource Team interview information and suggestions were incorporated in the Texas Agricultural Extension Service Community Futures Forum and a resulting 2000-2003 Action Plan was completed in August.

Plans for development currently include several new projects. An RV park has been designed to be located at a site on Highway 70. This will involve beautification of the site. Demolition of the vacant building that was on the property has been completed. In another project, housing will be moved from a closed Air Force base nearby into the City of Jayton for the development of an assisted living facility. Jayton has also made progress in its beautification efforts. A Design a Sign Contest was held, and a cash prize awarded to the person who designed the most appealing sign and slogan to be used at entrances to the city. The city has legislated ordinances regarding grass and weed length, waste disposal, and animal control. It is also in the process of procuring grant money to be allocated to solid waste disposal and tree limb management equipment. Leadership development has also been stressed. Five people participated in the Texas Rural Leadership Program, graduating in May 1999. Their new skills are now being applied in the Kent County Enhancement Program.

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LINDEN, TEXAS "Welcome to Music City Texas - You Being Here Puts a Song In Our Heart

Last update: 1/00

Linden participated in a Resource Team visit in November 1996. Known as "Music City, Texas," Linden has continued to work on the city's image while simultaneously implementing a number of economic development, tourism, and community projects.

Linden continues to add to the list of new stores opening in the city. Crumps grocery store is open for business. Also, "Friends", a new downtown coffee shop and bakery has applied to the Linden Economic Development Corporation (LEDC) for grant money to restore one of the downtown buildings. LEDC provides low interest loans for new businesses.

Festivals are another way the community brings people to visit city. The city annually holds a Wildflower Festival, Lumberjack Days, and in the summer holds MarketFest. MarketFest is opened in the downtown square and features a farmer's market, arts and crafts, food, and musical entertainment. This year Market Fest will be held July 14 and August 11.

Lumberjack Days are a summer celebration for the community and visitors to celebrate the timber industry. Food, fun, games and of course live music are offered. This year's festival is scheduled for July 1st. This year Eagles singer/songwriter Don Henley generously donated a guitar signed by the Eagles to the festivities. The Music City Texas organization sponsors this festival.

The community's main concern revolves around making sure enough water is available for the city. Citizens are debating on whether to pump water in from the Lake of Pines or use wells to provide adequate drinking water. LEDC is continuing their efforts to develop an Industrial Park. Negotiations are underway with several potential tenants.

Consultant Cindy Helferstay explained that there is still an obvious increase in community pride. With the expansion of U.S. Highway 59, Linden has taken the initiative of installing two billboards to encourage travelers to get off the highway to visit the city. Linden has also received a grant for a mural to be created in the downtown area.
Additionally, the city has sold more than 73 memorial benches that will be placed around the city and the new RV/city park that is being created.

Linden citizens have attended many leadership and training seminars. Rural Development, grant writing and community development are a few of the training sessions that community leaders recently attended. Finally, Linden was awarded a grant from the Texas Department of Health-Tobacco Division to create an antismoking mural in town.

These projects and more are featured in Linden’s own website at www.prysm.net/~ledc.

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LUFKIN, TEXAS

Last update: 7/00

A Resource Team visited the Lufkin area June 7-9 2000. The report is being prepared and will be issued later this summer. The report will cover the entire Angelina County community. While the community is awaiting the report, groups have already set up meetings to work together to try and implement positive changes. During one of the sessions, several nonprofits discovered that they were working separately on the same project. Consequently, they also started discussions on how they combine resources to work together. At the Town
Hall Meeting, the Lufkin Community Development Team volunteered to post the final report online so that more people may access the final report.

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RANGER, TEXAS "There's no Stranger in Ranger"

Last update: 6/00

Ranger participated in a Resource Team visit in April 1998. They have had many successful projects improving the appearance and quality of life in the city.

The Beautification Committee has landscaped the area around the entrances to Main Street and the gazebo. The entrances are very inviting because flower boxes have been built and bright flowers planted to welcome residents and visitors.

Committee members are working with the JC's to landscape around the JC Barn. The antique lights around the barn have been restored and new trees and shrubs will be planted. Additionally, the community has been working with TXU Electric to install new streetlights to the main entrance. They are continuing to work on placing new street signs around the city. This project should be completed in 2001.

The Leadership team meets monthly and they are following up on "all the things that are being done or need to be done." No small task, but
residents have certainly proven themselves by continuing their work on many ambitious projects.

To find out more about Ranger contact:

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RISING STAR

Last update: 1/00

Rising Star participated in a Resource Team visit in July 1997. The city is involved in numerous projects.

According to City Secretary Jan Clark the recreational vehicle park is, "going wonderfully." Six new hookups are going to be added this year. The city and the economic development corporation have also funded adding bar-b-q grills and picnic tables to the park. In July, Rising Star hosted the Freedom Festival. Residents participated in a parade and festival. October 14th the city will host Octoberfest. There will be a brisket cook off, arts and crafts, games, parade, and vendors. The community is looking forward to this event.

During the resource team visit, vacant lots and clean up issues were cited as problems. The city is still working on cleaning vacant lots. In other beautification efforts, as part of a city council directive, the city is focusing on removing junk vehicles from public view.

Rising Star continues to receive positive media publicity. They are mentioned in the "Texas Midwest Guide" and the "Tolling Through West Texas" travel publication. Rising Star also is highlighted in the
Rocksprings

Last update: 6/00

Rocksprings participated in a Resource Team visit in August 1999. The community has celebrated many successes in the short year since the visit.

In May, voters approved a ∏ cent sales tax increase. The tax was passed by an overwhelming majority of the voters. The community will use monies to fund quality of life improvements and projects that are reviewed in public hearings and approved by the Rocksprings City Council. Rocksprings leaders credit the Resource Team by providing the foundation so the voters could successfully pass the sales tax referendum. The perspective and awareness on this project and other community projects were attributed to discussions that were the focus of the Resource Team visit in August.

The Rocksprings community has been involved in many other projects. The community is looking forward to celebrating an August 2000 opening of the joint County-School Library. The historically recognized Rocksprings
Hotel, which has undergone recent renovations, has reopened for business.

Discussions are underway to open a park in Rocksprings. Talks have resumed with state officials and Rocksprings officials are optimistic about the creation of a new park. Rocksprings city and Edwards County officials are exploring consolidation of certain services in efforts to cut taxpayer costs. They also are researching ways to maintain sustainable and affordable housing for elderly residents.

One of the strengths of the City of Rocksprings is the community's willingness to explore and research new ideas. They have seen many accomplishments in the past year and are exploring and working on new projects and ideas that will lead them into the next year.

For additional information:

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SANDERSON, TEXAS

Last update: 7/00

Sanderson participated in a Resource Team visit in June 1999. Upon completion of the resource team visit, Sanderson requested and received Resource Team leadership in three extra town meetings. Neighbors have followed these meeting efforts up by implementing several new projects, utilizing leaders from within the town. They cited many successful projects in the 1999-2000 Sanderson efforts to improve their community.

Sally Rawlins, Principal of Rawlins & Associates, a rural economic development firm and contractor for Terrell County, gave the resource team credit for helping the community become aware of what needed to be done. Residents began to understand how much they agreed about what is both wrong and right about the town. Ms. Rawlins explained that the town had a renewed sense of energy and focus after the resource team’s visit,
even more so after the three follow-up town meetings.

Beautifying the community, developing leadership, and achieving a consensus were three goals they stressed. As a result of committee efforts, several projects have been successfully completed. Signs are now posted welcoming people and directing them to local places. A group of leaders is working with Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) officials to work farther on landscaping, as well as in planning their railroad depot renewal project. The county sponsored the 5th Annual City Clean Up last spring. Road and Bridge Director and School Board member, Mike Sanchez, described, "It was the best one to date. The commissioners added an extra week for our road and bridge team to pick up and dispose of large household items left along curbs."

Terrell County has also received several grants. They were awarded a $15,000 Great American Station Foundation Grant to fence the town's depot and to bring professionals in to report if, and how, to restore it. Graduate architecture students from Texas Tech's Community Design Department came to town as first reviewers, and interest from around the state increases.

Terrell County TeleCommunity (TCTC) a collaborative effort between the court and school system) was one of fifty rural groups to receive a community networking Telecommunication Infrastructure Fund (TIF) Board Grant. That $20,000 planning grant allowed them to secure professional community networking help in preparing themselves to build a local technology network. The network will open public access sites to the Internet, and it will increase the work in progress to build local leadership opportunities. Announcement of winning communities will come in August. Angela Kenney, Co-Director of TCTC, stated that they budgeted for six of the community networkers to attend the Texas Rural Development Council's (TRDC) annual meeting in October. They made the decision because of the networking opportunities that last year's convention offered locals.

Plans are underway to create a privately led and funded Economic Development Board. Also, Sanderson plans to pursue a rural technology incubator. Recent efforts to study airport needs has also raised community support; as another, newly defined, local leader led the revival of the previously defunct commission. They have already designed an airport rules and regulation model that other cities are requesting.

Another benefit to Sanderson was widely publicized. There was a huge increase in political participation in the recent elections. More people
ran for positions in the county, water district, and for the school board elections. Another of the new leaders set up a voter information town hall meeting. Almost 100 people attended to learn more about the issues and candidates.

Sanderson, Terrell County, unincorporated and isolated, is dynamically alive! It always has been, but it begins to revitalize economically. Many of its neighbors give direct credit to the work of the TRDC Resource Team that began working with them a year ago.

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SEYMOUR, TEXAS

Last update: 1/00

The city of Seymour received a visit from a Texas Rural Development Council Resource Team on May 12-14, 1998 and they have wasted no time in taking the suggestions of the Resource Team to heart. Already Seymour has allocated funds for the hiring of a full time economic development coordinator. They have also begun a second leadership program for all interested citizens. The people of Seymour are enthusiastic about continued community leadership training, which is the key to economic development and a healthy community.

To learn more about Seymour contact: John Studer
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STEPHENVILLE, TEXAS

Last update: 8/00

Stephenville and surrounding areas in Erath County participated in a Resource Team visit in September 1998. Six resource teams interviewed groups of people from all of the community. The total number of people interviewed was over 950 compared to just 1206 who voted in the last major election (a school bond issue, a contested city council, and mayoral election).

The strategic planning committee of the Chamber of Commerce organized a yearlong planning effort following the Resource Team visit. Joe McFarland, Resident Director of Research at the Agricultural Research and Extension Center and the primary Stephenville contact, stated that the committee developed the Stephenville Community Long-Range Development Plan. The plan has been extremely valuable in setting the direction for the community, according to Rick Murphy, the Executive Director of the Chamber. The Plan has eight goal areas: agricultural industry, area economic development, community, downtown revitalization, education, governance/infrastructure, residential housing, and tourism. Accomplishments have been achieved of these areas. A Cinco de Mayo celebration is a direct outcome of the planning process. The high priority of water has resulted in the continuing development of a 50 year plan. The Chamber is sponsoring a housing needs study for the benefit of housing development in the community and county. A feasibility study for an Erath County Events Center was developed with participation by all segments of Stephenville and Dublin. The study has been turned over to county government. The process of development of the strategic plan by the 20-plus members of the Chamber planning committee has been very important in building relationships and trust across the community. Two Leadership Stephenville classes have further developed
relationships and leadership capabilities in and outside the community. For additional information, please contact Rick Murphy at 254 965-5313 or Joe McFarland.

Stephenville contacts: Joe McFarland, Resident Director of Research, Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, Rt. 2 Box 00, Stephenville, Texas 76401 Phone: (254) 968-4144 Fax: (254) 965-3759 E-mail: m-mcfarland1@tamu.edu OR visit the website at Stephenville Report

THROCKMORTON, TEXAS

Last update: 7/00

A Resource Team visited Throckmorton May 2-4 2000. The report is being prepared and will be issued later this summer. While the community is awaiting the report, groups have already organized and held planning meetings. Projects that are being considered include starting a rural leadership program and creating a Throckmorton Strategic Plan. A follow up meeting will be held August 9th with members of the Chamber of Commerce to discuss the final report.

RC&D leaders have been involved in several projects. One of the needs that the report will highlight is the need to access water. A survey of the Throckmorton City Lake has been done. Throckmorton residents are working with County Judge Trey Carrington to apply for an emergency grant from the Texas Water Development Board to install a water pipeline to obtain water from the City of Graham.

Once the final Resource Team report is issued, other projects will be considered for implementation.

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TOLAR, TEXAS

Last update: 7/00

Tolar participated in a Resource Team visit in June 1999. They have followed up on several projects and have seen many results in the last year.

Several meetings have been set up in the community to work on starting a community center. Also, a historical group in town has been formed. A house was donated to the group that will be restored. To raise money to restore the house, the community held a quilt raffle during the July 4th holiday celebration. When complete, both the historical commission and the Tolar Chamber of Commerce will office out of this building.

Mayor Gayle Meyer explained that as a result of the resource team's visit, "we all became aware of the needs." In addition to the previously mentioned projects, the Tolar community has created a clean-up program to beautify the city. Tolar residents share a renewed sense of pride for their community and citizens have become more active in chamber and community events.

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WEST COLUMBIA, TEXAS " The First Capital of the Republic of Texas and Home of Varner Hogg State Park"

Last update: 1/00
Since the September 1996 visit of a Texas Rural Development Council Resource Team to West Columbia, things in the small coastal community have been moving in a positive direction. Soon thereafter, the citizens of West Columbia initiated a detailed strategic plan to govern the gradual but steady series of efforts that are being employed to turn aspirations into realities. The school's mascot was quickly placed on the water tower to foster a collective sense of pride and unity in West Columbia. West Columbia is a self-initiated Main Street City thanks to the citizen's decision to "pull themselves up by their bootstraps" and repair their Main Street. On July 20, 1998 the City Council approved a merger of the Main Street activities and the Chamber of Commerce. The new and rejuvenated Main Street hosts a quarterly "Market Days" festival, and is successfully drawing visitors into West Columbia.

Another significant political development is that the city manager retained a firm that will prepare a "Master Plan" for the city's development. This measure was funded with money obtained from grants. In June 1998 the city held a strategic planning meeting to review what the Chamber of Commerce, the City Government, the Economic Development Corporation, and the Economic Development Task Force are doing. Each group is going to have to account for its actions and present them to the community at a second meeting scheduled for September 1998. In the meantime, construction of a 23 acre city park that will include spaces for recreational vehicles, an Olympic-sized pool, three softball fields, and a pavilion. A full-color brochure was also printed up about West Columbia and is being distributed throughout the area. West Columbia believes that these events are only the beginning.

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West Columbia’s website is located at www.west-columbia.tx.us

TEXAS RURAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

TELEVIDEO CONFERENCES

Using Telecommunication Technologies to Provide Opportunities to Texas’ Rural Communities was the theme for the Telecommunications Infrastructure Committee of the Texas Rural Development Council (TRDC) three-part series of live broadcast televideo conferences held June 6th,
July 11th and August 8th.

The purpose of these conferences was to introduce leaders of rural communities within Texas to telecommunication technology and the many opportunities this technology brings to their communities. Seventeen locations throughout Texas interacted with other locations using televideo technology. The June 6th topic covered Introduction to Technology: What is it? What can it do for my community? The July 11th session looked at examples of communities that are going through the process of getting started. The August 8th topic covered Financing: Where do communities get the money to do this? and How can they get started?

Panels of experts provided presentations during each session and then responded to questions from the audience. Approximately 500 representatives from rural communities were present at the sites during the three conferences. The Resource Conservation and Development Coordinators (RC&D’s) provided facilitation services for site locations.

This statewide effort was driven by TRDC partners Honey Dowdy, Burleson County Industrial Foundation; Michael L. Brown, Texas Skills Standards Board; Betty Voights, Capital Area Planning Council; Mark Freeman, Natural Resource Conservation Service; Earnest J. Gerlach, Center for Economic Development, University of Texas at San Antonio; Jim Bob Ward, Real Time Internet Services; Rick Nader, Public Policy Research Institute, Texas A & M University; and William Craig, Co-Chair, Burleson County Wide Network (BC-Win).

Videotapes of each session are available. Anyone wanting a copy of these sessions should contact Joe LaBarbera, RC&D Coordinator at (409) 846-0819. e-mail: jlabarbe@tx.nrcs.usda.gov There is a nominal fee for the tapes.