

**Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council
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Joe González Director, Area Agency on Aging	Sandra Boyd Director, Homeland Security and Regional Training
Andrew Canon Director, Hidalgo County MPO	Manuel Flores Director, Transit Services

Mission Statement

“ENCOURAGE AND PERMIT LOCAL UNITS OF GOVERNMENT TO JOIN AND COOPERATE WITH ONE ANOTHER AND WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF MAJOR ECONOMIC INTERESTS, CITIZEN GROUPS AND GROUPS EXPERIENCING ECONOMIC DISTRESS TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH, SAFETY AND GENERAL WELFARE OF THEIR CITIZENS AND TO PLAN FOR THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION”

REGIONAL PURSUITS

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REGIONAL PURSUITS

Rio Metro Introduces “Intercity Transportation”

Rio Metro Urban Transportation system proudly introduces “Intercity Transit”. In an effort to promote further coordination between the cities of Mission, McAllen, Edinburg, Pharr, San Juan, Alamo, Donna, Weslaco, and Mercedes Rio Metro has extended its service times and coverage area to include transit Monday through Saturday from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm in the larger metropolitan areas of Hidalgo County. The citizens of the County will have a greater variety of transit options such as shopping at various retail centers, attending higher educational facilities, or attending recreational activities patrons will now have transit options that were previously unavailable.

Connectivity: In keeping with its seamless transit initiative Rio Metro Intercity gives passengers the choice of transferring to other public transit systems, such as McAllen Express Transit and national and international lines such as Valley Transit/Greyhound Lines and Grupo Senda providing access to interstate and international travel.

Elderly and Disabled transportation: Rio Metro’s long standing practice of addressing the transit needs of the Elderly and Disabled has not changed and the new Intercity program continues to offer safe, reliable, and affordable transportation services.

For more information on route changes and any other questions that you may have in reference to Rio Metro Intercity urban transit services please call LRGVDC transit offices at 1-800-574-8322 or (956) 969-5761. Details are also available on the LRGVDC website www.lrgvdc.org.

Case Management Staff Busy Distributing Thanksgiving Baskets

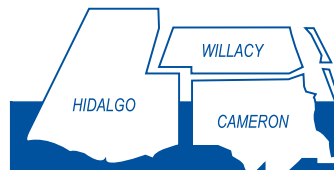
The McAllen First United Methodist Church has coordinated with the LRGVDC Area Agency on Aging for the delivery of Thanksgiving Baskets to the less fortunate elderly in the community. On November 19th and 20th the congregation and Area Agency on Aging case management staff distributed over 75 food baskets to the frail homebound elderly who live in the surrounding McAllen area. This coordination between the church and the Area Agency on Aging has assisted many of the elderly who have no family or means to purchase and cook a Thanksgiving meal. The baskets included a fully cooked turkey with all the trimmings and fresh produce and canned goods.

Special thanks to Ms. Susan Hellums, Border Area Mission Coordinator and the McAllen First United Methodist Church’s congregation for the tremendous effort in coordinating and organizing all the donations and deliveries to our clients for the past six years.



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Area Agency on Aging launches Medicare Part D Enrollment efforts

An event entitled “Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Medicare Part D, But Were Afraid to Ask” was held for local pharmacists and social workers in the Cameron and Willacy County areas. This was a prelude to the event in Brownsville on November 9th. Over 200 seniors heard from Norma Almanza, Texas Department of Insurance, Anna Lopez, Social Security Administration, and Dora Morena, Texas Health and Human Services Commission. Attendees also heard from representatives from Congressman Solomon Ortiz, State Senator Eddie Lucio, and State Representative Rene Oliveira’s office. The main purpose of this event was to prepare the seniors for the upcoming enrollment period and to also inform them of the Low Income Subsidy Program. The Centers for Medicare Medicaid Service’s Medicare Bus made a brief stop at the event. Other events have continued to be held in several sites in Hidalgo County.



Brownsville Mayor Eddie Treviño, Jr. welcoming seniors to the Medicare Port “D” Kick-off Event on November 9th in Brownsville.

2nd Annual South Texas Caregiver Conference was a Success

The conference was a success with approximately 70 in attendance. This conference has been structured to be a professional development opportunity for professional staff that work directly with family caregivers. A preliminary review of the evaluations shows that the conference attendees were very satisfied with the arrangements and the overall sessions. The dates for the 3rd Annual South Texas Care Conference are November 3 - 5, 2007 at the Holiday Inn Sunspree in South Padre Island. The only casualty of the conference was the tie worn by the Director of the Area Agency on Aging. During the opening session a South Padre Island Police officer cut the tie in half because of the Island’s “No Tie” Ordinance.



2nd Annual South Texas Caregiver Conference attendees sharing a brief moment of seriousness during the opening session.

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Course (FEMA Course G317) LRGVDC Leading by Example

For the past two years the LRGVDC CERT Program, a sub-program under the Citizen Corps, has made this type of training available to local citizens and communities of the region. Efforts and the focus of reaching out to the communities will continue.

Some of the positive benefits to this approach are; self-promotion of the program, another major advantage with this type of strategy is that by concentrating on businesses and organizations the program outreach multiplies and further enhances the awareness capabilities within the region. Undoubtedly, people spend the majority of their time at work. It is most likely that when a disaster strikes it will happen when citizens are at their place of business. Should volunteers be called upon for future exercises and further training events or when disaster strikes in a different part of Texas the immediate location and identification of volunteer(s) is essential.

In early November, the LRGVDC, Citizen Corps — CERT Training Program embarked on a mission. The new mission will target businesses and organizations to provide them with an opportunity for CERT Training. Leading by example, the LRGVDC embraced the idea and Staff from several of the departments paved the way by participating in this unique and first time ever milestone.

With collaborative and coordinated assistance from Lower Rio Grande Valley First Responder Agencies, State Representative Armando “Mando” Martinez, a certified Professional Firefighter and Paramedic, Tony Lopez, Emergency Medical Response Team member out of the Weslaco Fire/EMS Department, and LT Rene Alaniz, McAllen Fire Department, LRGVDC Staff commenced the CERT Training on November 13-16, 2006 and continued with assistance from the Weslaco Fire/EMS Department and McAllen Fire Department on December 04-07, 2006. The CERT Training successfully concluded with a simulated mock exercise December 08, 2006.

CERT COURSE:

This course is intended to provide the knowledge and skills citizen volunteers need to effectively serve their community; efforts to prepare for local emergencies and respond to them are the focus. CERT’s are organized, trained, and equipped to educate the public regarding emergency preparedness and perform many of the emergency functions needed in the aftermath of a disaster. CERT’s coordinate their efforts with, and are intended to supplement the efforts of, a community’s professional emergency response staff.

The CERT course consists of eight modules, which address:

- Disaster preparedness
- Fire suppression
- Disaster medical operations (2 modules)
- Light search and rescue
- Team organization and disaster psychology
- Terrorism and CERT
- Course review and disaster simulation

The Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC) Citizen Corps Committee is pleased to announce that the CERT Training for the public and organizations is available at the request of a community or group of individuals. This is a 20 hour course developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in cooperation with fire departments.

The course is open to all residents and organizations of the three county area which are Cameron, Hidalgo and Willacy Counties who are at least 16 years of age. Those under 18 are required to be accompanied by a parent. There is no fee and printed materials will be provided on-site, however, participants may be required to bring some personal equipment or supplies. For more information on CERT and points of contact within your community, please contact the LRGVDC at 956-682-3481.



CERTS Mock Exercise



The LRGVDC Citizens Emergency Response Training System (C.E.R.T.S.) team graduated on December 8th upon completion of the 20 hour Citizen’s Corps C.E.R.T.S. training. The team, made up of representatives of each of the LRGVDC Departments trained in CPR, first aid, fire suppression and light search and rescue. The training enables participants to act as neighborhood Emergency Responders in the event of an emergency. Participants included Terrie Salinas and Anna DeLeon of Economic Development, Marcie Oviedo of Regional Planning, Joe Peña and Juan Tomes of 9-1-1, Elida Carranza of Area Agency on Aging, Eloy Gonzalez II of Homeland Security and Training, Maribel Contreras and Robert Diaz representing Transit and Linda Yarbrough of Human Resources. Congratulations to all! Special thanks to guest instructor State Representative Armando Martinez.

State officials recognize Lower Rio Grande Valley area’s \$5.17 million grant efforts

The Office of Rural Community Affairs (ORCA) recognized recipients for their contributions to local communities with the presentation of an oversized, ceremonial check to each of the grantees. ORCA Representatives present at the presentation were Steve Mendoza and Clarissa Martinez. Local Representatives included Mayor David Privett - Laguna Vista, Mayor Louie Martinez - Indian Lake, Mayor Diamantina Bennett — Los Indios, Mayor Silvestre Garcia — Combes, Mayor Pro-Tem Connie Vera and Commissioner Henry De La Paz — Lyford, Pete Dela Cruz, Erika Reyna, Don Mendina, Commissioner Sylvia Handy and Mayor Beto Salinas — Hidalgo County, and Mayor Oscar De Luna San Perlita. The event took place at the LRGVDC Board of Director’s meeting on November 16th, 2006, 1:30 p.m. at Weslaco City Hall. The event honored the 14 grant recipients listed below:

Grant Recipient	Funding Received
Laguna Vista	\$331,808.
Indian Lake	\$331,808.
Los Indios	\$331,808.
Combes	\$435,061.
Cameron County	\$500,000.
Cameron County	\$500,000.
Combes	\$47,200.
Hidalgo County	\$500,000.
Hidalgo County	\$500,000.
Hidalgo County	\$440,017.
Lyford	\$331,808.