

**Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council
Board of Directors 2007-2008
Executive Committee**

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Commissioner John Ingram City of McAllen	2nd Vice President
Mayor Chris Boswell City of Harlingen	Secretary
Mayor Pro-Tem Alvin Samano Member-at-Large	Treasurer
Commissioner Sylvia Handy Hidalgo County	Immediate Past President

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Judge Eliseo Barnhart	Willacy County
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Mayor Norberto "Beto" Salinas	City of Mission
Mayor Leo "Polo" Palacios, Jr.	City of Pharr
Mayor Orlando Correa	City of Raymondville
Mayor Joe Hernandez	City of San Benito
Mayor Pro-Tem Eddie Rodriguez	City of San Juan
Mayor Buddy de la Rosa	City of Weslaco
Dr. J. Gilbert Leal, President	T.S.T.C.
Mr. Roberto Loreda	PSJA I.S.D.
Mr. Gale Armstrong, Manager	El Jardin Water Supply Corporation
Mr. Michael G. Wilson, Manager	Port Mansfield PUB * Willacy Co. Navigation Dist.
Mr. Don Medina	Member-at-Large

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Anna Hernandez Director, Human Resources	Terrie Salinas Director, Economic Development
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
Juan Gomez Director, 9-1-1 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

Hon. Norma G. Garcia Elected LRGVDC President

The Hon. Norma G. Garcia was unanimously elected Board President of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC). “I am honored to have been elected as your new President, and I pledge to continue the positive momentum and progress created by Past Presidents of this organization. The regional approach is an effective method to address the comprehensive needs of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, and the LRGVDC will continue to be a leader in this regard,” stated Hon. Norma G. Garcia.



The remaining LRGVDC Board officers elected are: Mr. Arturo Ramirez, 1st Vice President; McAllen Commissioner John Ingram, 2nd Vice President; Harlingen Mayor Chris Boswell, Secretary; Hidalgo Mayor Pro-Tem Alvin Samano, Treasurer; and, Hidalgo County Commissioner Sylvia Handy, Immediate Past President. Other members of the current LRGVDC Board of Directors include: Commissioner Edna Tamayo, Cameron County; Judge Eliseo Barnhart, Willacy County; Commissioner Victor Perez, City of Alamo; Mayor Pro-Tem Carlos A. Cisneros, City of Brownsville; Mayor Silvestre Garcia, City of Combes; Mayor Ricardo L. Morales, City of Donna; Council Member Gus Garcia, City of Edinburg; Mayor Steve Brewer, City of La Feria; Mayor Joel Quintanilla, City of Mercedes; Mayor Norberto Salinas, City of Mission; Mayor Leo Palacios, Jr., City of Pharr; Mayor Orlando Correa, City of Raymondville; Mayor Joe Hernandez, City of San Benito; Mayor Pro-Tem Eddie Rodriguez, City of San Juan; Mayor Buddy de la Rosa, City of Weslaco; Dr. J. Gilbert Leal, TSTC; Mr. Roberto Loreda, PSJA I. S. D.; Mr. Gale Armstrong, El Jardin Water Supply; Mr. Michael G. Wilson, Port Mansfield PUB & Willacy County Navigation District; and, Mr. Don Medina, Member-at-Large.

The LRGVDC Board Meetings are normally held the 4th Thursday of each month. For more information on meeting times and locations please visit our website at www.lrgvdc.org



Outgoing Board President Commissioner Sylvia Handy (left) was recognized with a plaque presented by newly elected Board President Hon. Norma G. Garcia at the June LRGVDC Board of Directors meeting.

The State of Texas Assessment of the LRGVDC Region's Radio Communications Capabilities -- Regional Communications Interoperability Exercise

On June 13-14, 2007, the State of Texas, National Emergency Response and Rescue Training Center (NERRTC) scheduled a test of the regions first responder's interoperable communication systems capabilities by conducting an Interoperable Communications Functional Exercise. The regional communications functional exercise was a one and a half day exercise.



The **SIMULATED** Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)/Terrorism Exercise is designed to help prepare jurisdictions for the consequence management functions in the first 12-24 hours after a terrorist WMD attack or disaster. The regional exercise was an assessment-based exercise conducted in the communities within the LRGVDC Council of Governments (COG) region with the focus on evaluating the regional horizontal and vertical communications operability and interoperability systems.

The exercise consisted of a designated number of exercise cells that included an Incident Command Post (ICP) which consisted of all the primary players from the first responder arena from all participating jurisdictions and the designated Emergency Operation Center's (EOC's). The participant's task was to: establish radio communications between local disciplines and mutual aid response entities, operate on different frequency bands, add additional communications components as necessary, and develop an incident communications plan as part of the response to the **simulated** catastrophic Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) event that took place at the Port of Brownsville.

Past and current recipients of homeland security funding were required to participate. ALL other local, state and federal agencies were highly encouraged to do so as well. Several agencies prestaged communication equipment at the ICP, Brownsville Fire Station # 8. The number of agencies who participated in the exercise was an impressive (46) forty six by the end of day one. As expressed by NERRTC personnel who were extremely impressed, the number of agencies surpassed all other regions by far. All first responder agencies matched and exceeded the communication exercise tasks. Upon completion of the exercise, NERRTC assisted the jurisdictions in completing a post exercise report that the jurisdictions will

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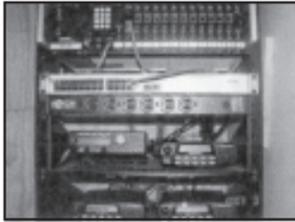


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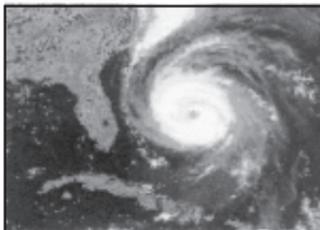
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submit to GDEM for forwarding to Office of Domestic Preparedness (ODP) as per the requirements of the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP). The report will include the exercise events list, an exercise summary of events, and training observations made by subject matter experts addressing the ICP, EOC and any other responding emergency command or supporting node requested in the exercise drafting process. NERRTC Staff will also be providing a written post-exercise report to GDEM that will later be provided to the region's leadership 90 days after the completion of the exercise.



Preparing for Hurricane Season Your Safety—Your Responsibility First!

Hurricane Season is here... have a plan ready. June 1st marked the official start of the 2007 Hurricane Season. The first line of defense in protecting yourself, your family and your property comes from being informed and prepared for a tropical storm or hurricane in your area. Here are FEMA's top 10 tips for becoming "Hurricane Ready."



- **Know what problems you might face if a storm is approaching.** Are you in a storm surge area or an area that is flood-prone? Do you live in a mobile home? Is your area vulnerable to tropical storm force winds?
- **Create an emergency plan for you, your family or friends.** Make sure everyone is familiar with the plan and practice it at least once before a storm forms in the Gulf. The American Red Cross and Ready.gov have excellent information on developing your plans.
- **Build an emergency kit.** Include one for your home and one for your car in case you have to evacuate. Make sure to include cash, important papers such as mortgage and insurance information along with food items, water, medications, etc.
- **Have an individual or family communications plan.** Pick someone in another region as an emergency contact so people will know where you and your family are located. This plan will also help if you and your immediate family get separated during a storm event.
- **Plan for family members or others with special needs or disabilities.** Consider the medications or items specific to their needs in the emergency kit. If you don't have a car or need special transportation,



make arrangements with friends, neighbors or relatives for a ride. You can also contact your local emergency manager to find out what arrangements may be available. It's critical to have a plan ahead of time!

- **Know where to go if you are instructed to evacuate.** Do you have family or friends with whom you can stay? If making hotel reservations, make sure to confirm them.
- **Stay alert to weather information and listen to your local emergency managers.** Keep your gas tank full at all times. When they say it's time to evacuate, DO IT!
- **Be prepared to be on your own for several days whether you evacuate or not.** That may include being without electricity or clean drinking water. Take this into consideration when building your emergency kit.
- **Prepare your home and property for severe weather.** Suggestions include flood-proofing your home, securing your mobile home, and if outside of a flood area, building a safe room to protect from wind and tornadoes. Also, consider purchasing flood insurance now. There is a 30-day waiting period before the policy goes into effect. Go to Floodsmart.gov for details.
- **Include your pets in your planning.** It is critical to board them or take them with you. In either case, advance planning remains the key to your animal's health and safety and your peace of mind. The Humane Society provides excellent tips on preparing your pets for emergencies.

For more information on disaster preparedness, visit www.ready.gov, www.fema.gov, Texas Governor's Division of Emergency Management, or www.lrgvdc.com

Recognizing Centenarians of the Lower Rio Grande Valley

The Lower Rio Grande Valley Area Agency on Aging kicked off Older Americans Month by sponsoring the 10th Annual Centenarian Recognition in McAllen. The Social Security Administration district offices in McAllen and Brownsville assisted by mailing out all the invitations to all the centenarians on their records for the four county areas of Cameron, Hidalgo, Willacy, and Starr. According to their records, invitations were mailed to over 150 centenarians.

In attendance at the event were fifteen centenarians with their families and friends. Of special importance was Juliana Alejandro from Weslaco, Texas, who turned 109 years old in June. Mrs. Alejandro has been attending the annual recognition event ever since she was 100. Right behind her in age was Maria N. Guerrero, 107 years old. There were several 102 and 103 year olds present.



Juliana Alejandro 109 and Maria Guerrero 107

First Annual Long Term Care Symposium

The Area Agency on Aging's Ombudsman Program sponsored its "First Annual Long-Term-Care Symposium on May 24th. The event was prepared for Social Workers from local nursing homes. They received information and training in such areas as the Elder Rights Division, Elder Exploitation, Qualified Income Trust (Millers Trust), Medicaid Estate Recovery Program, Relocation Project (Money Follows the Person), Working with Ombudsman and the Guardianship Program. Presenters came from as far away as Austin and Corpus Christi.



Attendees and AAA OMB Staff attending 1st Annual LTC Symposium

Foster Grandparents Honored with "A Night Out With The Stars" Awards Ceremony

The Foster Grandparent Volunteers were honored with an awards ceremony on May 11, 2007 at the Marble Arch Banquet and Conference Center in Mercedes, Texas. The Theme was "A Night Out With the Stars". The Foster Grandparents were the Stars for the night and were dressed in semi-formal or formal attire. Volunteer site staff and family members were in attendance to join the program in honoring the Foster Grandparents from the three counties served: Hidalgo, Willacy and Cameron Counties.

The Program recognized a senior from the community who had made an impact on a child and shared her story. Miss Sylvia Yanes, Program Administrator presented Aurora "Nana" Aguirre with an Honorary Foster Grandparent Award. The Youngest Grandparent Award went to Martha Gonzalez. The Oldest Volunteer Award went out to Laurencia Palmer. The Most Hours went to Julia Tijerina. Perfect Attendance went out to Eva Cortez, David Ochoa and Julia Tijerina.



Collage of FGP Volunteers honored.

Members from the AmeriCorps Youth Harvest were on hand to escort the Foster Grandparents up to the stage to receive their awards. The young ladies from the AmeriCorps also assisted by handing the envelopes to the award presenters and the trophies as well.

The Foster Grandparents throughout the year spend quality time working with children with special and exceptional needs. They provide a link with the past and the future to bring love, understanding, wisdom

and nurturing to the children they serve. It was the program's wish to give them a night to remember for all that they do for the children and community's they serve. Their wish came true, because the Stars really did shine that night.

Those interested in becoming a foster grandparent volunteer can contact the LRGVDC at 956-682-3481.



Youth Group Help Elderly

On June 11-14th a youth group from Saint John United Methodist Church from Austin, Texas traveled to the Lower Rio Grande Valley to assist the low-income elderly in the community with home repairs. The Area Agency on Aging networked with the local First United Methodist Church in McAllen to coordinate a site for the youth to do their missionary work.

A work site was chosen according to the area requested by the group, an elderly couple from the Alamo area in need of a ramp were chosen. Due to the elderly couple's disabilities, both much needed the ramp. The group replaced a pre-existing front ramp that was hazardous and did not meet the ADA standards. The group also completed other home repairs in addition to a 6x6 backdoor porch with a 16ft.ramp landing.

It was a first work experience and the first trip to the valley for the group, they stated that they really enjoyed doing the work and just knowing that they helped someone in need was enough reward for them. The last day of work ended with a homemade Mexican meal for the group, courtesy of the elderly couple. The group consisted of five youth, the youth pastor and two adult church members.

Criminal Justice Program

Criminal Justice Department held technical assistance workshops for potential grantees regarding the FY 2008 grant application process. There were several Criminal Justice Division fund sources reviewed and prioritized by the Criminal Justice Advisory Committee during the months of April, May and June of 2007. which were the Victims of Crime Act Fund, Violence Against Women Act Fund, Safe Drug Free in Schools and Communities Act Fund, Criminal Justice Planning Fund, and the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act Fund. There were 32 grant applications submitted to the Office of Governor's Criminal Justice Division for the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council Region which consist of agencies within Cameron, Hidalgo and Willacy counties. The total amount requested from our region from all fund sources is \$4,155,019.