



DLT Grant and Loan Awards - Texas

2009 Grant Awards

Coastal Bend College

\$193,786

Texas

Counties Served: Bee, Brooks, Duvall, Jim Wells, Karnes, Live Oak

Contact: Dr. Thomas Baynum

Telephone: 361-358-2838

Congressional District: Ruben Hinajosa, TX-15

The project will link 9 rural schools with two campuses of the applicant via videoconferencing. The focus of this project is on providing health-related training to address the shortage of health care providers.

Region XIV Education Service Center

\$500,000

State: Texas, New Mexico

Counties Served: TX: Callahan, Comanche, Eastland, Fisher, Haskell, Jones, Matagorda, Mitchell, Nolan, Scurry, Shackelford, Stephens, Stonewall, Taylor;

NM: Luna

Contact: Mr. Ronnie Jay Kincaid

Telephone: 325-675-8609

Congressional District: TX-11 Mike Conaway, TX-13 Mac Thornberry, TX-19 Randy Neugebauer, NM-2 Harry Teague

This project enhances and expands the Region's current distance learning videoconferencing capabilities throughout 42 school districts and their campuses to include video program development by both students and teachers.

Region 9 Education Service Center

\$336,024

Counties Served: Baylor, Hardeman, Jack, Matagorda, Montague, Wilbarger, Young, Zavala

Contact: Ms. Anne Poplin

Telephone: 940-767-3836

Congressional District: Mac Thornberry, TX-13; TX-14, Ron Paul; Randy Neugebauer, TX-19; Ciro Rodriguez, TX-23

This project will link 21 schools with the Region 9 Education Service Center with videoconferencing so that they can share resources among themselves. The focus of this project is to assist academic struggling students to build job skills and a strong work ethic



Riviera Independent School District

\$179,754

Texas

Counties Served: Kleburg

Contact: Mr. Ernest Havner

Telephone: 361-296-3101

Congressional District: Solomon Ortiz, TX-27

This project connects the public schools and local library of the town of Riviera to a regional education network backbone to provide expanded course offerings for the community, including courses for college credit, various certifications and career readiness.

Brazos Valley Community Action Agency, Inc.

\$233,831

Texas

Counties Served: Bee, Brooks, Duvall, Jim Wells, Karnes, Live Oak

Contact: Ms. Karen Garber

Telephone: 979-260-9835

Congressional District: Joe Barton, TX-6; Chet Edwards, TX-17

This project will link 4 rural community health centers with the applicant's center in Bryan, Texas with video conferencing as well as remote diagnostic tools. The project will provide healthcare to patients and residents of the centers with a focus on mental health, women's health, diabetes control, and other services.

2008 Grant Awards

Lytle Independent School District

Texas

\$393,058

Areas Served: Medina and Uvalde, 23rd Dist., Atascosa, 28th Dist

Contact: Mr. Randy Ewing

Telephone: (830) 709-5100

Congressional District: Rodriguez, 23rd, Cuellar, 28th

Rural Development grant funds will be used by Lytle ISD to install an IP standards-based interactive videoconferencing system that will serve 12 schools in rural south Texas. Through the interactive system all schools will be offered content for core curriculums, remediation assistance, continuing education, AP and dual credit courses, professional development and ACT/SAT preparation instruction.



The Texas Hill Country Higher Education Development Foundation

Texas

\$281,475

Areas Served: Gillespie, Burnet, Kimble, 11th Dist.

Contact: Mr. Jimmy Sparks

Telephone: (830) 990-4948

Congressional District: Conaway, 11th

Rural Development funds will be used for a distance learning project using interactive videoconferencing and web-based instruction. The project will be a collaboration of colleges and universities in Texas serving rural residents. Courses in education, nursing, doctoral programs, post-baccalaureate teacher certification programs, and a program in early childhood education and undergraduate degree concentrations in math and science will be offered to students and residents in areas of rural Texas.

White Oak Independent School District

Texas

\$210,139

Areas Served: Harrison, Gregg, Rusk, Smith, 1st Dist.; Cherokee, Wood, 5th Dist.; Zavala, 23rd Dist.

Contact: Ms. Donna Bogue

Telephone: (903) 877-5398

Congressional District: Gohmert; 1st, Hensarling; 5th, Rodriguez, 23rd

Rural Development grant funds will be used by White Oak ISD to upgrade their existing distance learning system and add additional end-user sites to the project. Through SUPERNet, educational opportunities will include higher quality instruction in rural schools, expansion of dual college enrollment courses, improvement of student performance and college readiness, expansion of professional development and support for intercultural understanding among all participants.

2007 Grant Awards

Education Service Center Region 12

Texas, Oklahoma

\$338,936

Areas Served: Limestone (part), Navarro; Lampasas, Mills; Bosque, Hill, Limestone (part), McLennan; Falls, Hamilton; Washita; Pontotoc

Contact: Dr. Glynis Rosas

Telephone: 254-709-7212

Fax: 254-666-0625

Congressional District: Barton; Conaway; Edwards; Carter; Lucas; Cole



This distance learning project will expand current distance learning capabilities and provide new access for 30 additional sites in rural areas of central Texas and southern Oklahoma. It will provide expanded course offerings and access to college preparatory course as well as presenting teaching staff with additional training and certification opportunities.

Odem-Edroy ISD

Texas

\$245,374

Areas Served: San Patricio, Nueces

Contact: Ron Squires

Telephone: 361-368-9312

Fax: 361-368-2222

Congressional District: TX-15 Hinojosa, TX-27 Ortiz

Rural Development funds will be used to expand distance learning in four independent school districts in rural San Patricio County. The project is designed to reach all students in the county, address capacity constraints in school campuses with existing distance learning, and offer new and expanded services to students and teachers.

Education Service Center Region 5

Texas

\$256,921

Areas Served: Jefferson; Hardin, Jasper, Newton, Orange, Tyler.

Contact: Ms. Krin Bryson

Telephone: 409-951-1765

Fax: 409-654-6471

Congressional District: Poe TX-2, TX-8 Brady.

The SE Texas Educational Network will use Rural Development grant funds to provide distance learning equipment and services to benefit 32 sites in 15 school districts in southeast Texas. These districts were extremely hard hit by Hurricane Rita in 2005. The project will benefit over 11,000 children and 844 teachers in grades K-8 by using technology to help them overcome barriers of distance, time and cost that currently prevent them from obtaining equitable access to the services that are available in urban areas. The network will allow for sharing of teacher resources and courses for the student population; training, certification and professional development for teachers in the service area; and special help for students with critical needs.



Texas A&M University – Kingsville

Texas

\$446,697

Areas Served: Brooks, Jim Wells; Bexar (part); Kleberg; Atacosa, Bexar (part), Frio

Contact: Sandra L. Rexroat

Telephone: 361-593-3344

Fax: 361-593-3409

Congressional District: TX – 15 Hinojosa; TX – 23 Rodriguez; TX – 27 Ortiz; TX -28 Cuellar

The project will connect rural high schools in southern Texas to each other and post secondary programs through the use of distance learning technologies. The goal is to provide increased content necessary for improved standardized test scores, college readiness material, ACT preparation, and dual credit courses in a cost-effective and affordable manner. Nine fixed sites will be included in the project.

Region 17 Education Service Center

Texas

\$499,920

Areas Served: Dawson, Crosby, King, Bailey, Borden, Cochran, Floyd, Gaines, Hale, Hockley, Kent, Lamb, Lynn, Terry, Yoakum

Contact: Dr. Kyle Wargo

Telephone: 806-281-5852

Fax: 806-799-7953

Congressional District: TX – 11 Conaway, TX – 13 Thornberry, TX – 19 Neugebauer

Texas School Region 17 will use grant funds to create 14 video conference centers within the school district. These distance learning centers will bring live, 2-way video and audio connections to classrooms with a remote teacher. Some funding will be used to replace outdated equipment in several locations.

2006 Grant Awards

McCamey County Hospital District

McCamey, TX

\$50,000

Areas Served: Ector, McCamey

Contact: Mrs. Peggy York

Telephone: 325-938-9868

Fax: 325-938-5768

Congressional District: TX-11



Rural Development funds will be used to develop teleradiology services by electronically transmitting patient X-Ray images and consultative text between various locations. The project is intended to deliver improved and timely patient care to the rural residents of McCamey using this technology to access radiologists 24 hours a day. The system will also utilize a PACS system to send, store, and retrieve vital patient information and images.

Region One Education Service Center

Edinburg, TX

\$253,650

Areas Served: Cameron, Hidalgo, Zapata

Contact: Ms. Elaine M. Sellhorn

Telephone: 956-984-6065

Fax: 956-984-6059

Congressional District: TX-15, 25, 27, 28

Rural Development funds will be used to link 19 rural campuses along the southeastern Rio Grande River. Students and teachers will receive enhanced curricular activities designed to improve language development, promote confidence, and enhance student learning opportunities through interaction with experts in the fields of science, math, history, and literature.

Region 9 Education Service Center

Wichita Falls, TX

\$296,638

Areas Served: Archer, Baylor, Clay, Foard, Hardeman, Jack, Knox, Montague, Pecos, Throckmorton, Wichita, Wilbarger, Zavala

Contact: Mrs. Susan R. Sullivan

Telephone: 940-322-6928

Fax: 940-767-3836

Congressional District: TX-13, 19, 23

Rural Development funds will be used to provide rural residents with distance learning capabilities that will include electronic field trips for elementary students, a character education program for students and parents, professional science development for elementary staff members and extended learning opportunities for rural residents in 71 schools.

Texas State Technical College – West Texas

Sweetwater, TX

\$52,559

Areas Served: TX-11, 13, 19, 23



Contact: Mark Hampton
Telephone: 325-734-3616
Fax: 324-734-3619
Congressional District: TX-11, 13, 19, 23

Rural Development funds will be used to assist all school districts in the West Texas Telecommunication Consortium with enhanced network functioning and distance learning. The project is an upgrade to a bridge which processes the audio and video signals used in videoconferencing or distance learning. The upgrade will allow the participating sites to add end users (classrooms) with a higher quality and more versatile signal.

2005 Grant Awards:

Education Service Center XI

Fort Worth, TX

\$500,000

Areas Served: Cameron, Cooke, Erath, Hidalgo, Johnson, Jim Wells, Palo Pinto, Parker, Tarrant, Wise, Willacy Counties

Contact: Gerri Maglia

Telephone: 817-740-3607

Fax: 817-740-3650

Congressional District: TX-11, TX-13, TX-15, TX-19, TX-25

Through improved connectivity and videoconferencing systems, the ESC will provide instruction and programs to local populations, as well as assisting in necessary language skills. Other benefits include professional development, collaboration with community resources such as museums and Spanish-speaking providers as well as coordination of healthcare and school children support. Approximately 34,000 residents in the project area will benefit.

Region XIV Education Service Center

Abilene, TX

\$499,990

Areas Served: Comanche, Taylor, Shackelford, Stonewall, Stephens, Scurry, Eastland, Callahan, Jones, Nolan, Mitchell, Haskell, Fisher, Uvalde, Jim Wells Counties

Contact: Tommy Bearden

Telephone: 325-675-8668

Fax: 325-675-8659

Congressional District: TX-06, TX-12, TX-13, TX-15, TX-17, TX-24, TX-26, TX-27, TX-31



The project will develop local content, provide assistance for state-mandated tests, expand high school distance learning courses, and provide opportunities for non-college-bound high school students. The videoconferencing project will serve 31 school districts and over 26,000 students. The area served covers over 12,000 square miles.

Region 16 Education Service Center

Amarillo, TX

\$500,000

Areas Served: Armstrong, Castro, Carson, Collingsworth, Donley, Gray, Hall, Hansford, Hutchison, Hemphill, Lipscomb, Oldham, Potter, Swisher, Union, Roberts, Wheeler, Zavala, Randall Counties

Contact: Greg Stockstill

Telephone: 806-677-5260

Fax: 806-677-5253

Congressional District: TX-13

The project will install new videoconferencing equipment which will provide virtual field trips, live instruction through the sharing of teachers, streaming content of archived video sessions, and curriculum enhancement. The project will serve approximately 12573 students in the Texas Panhandle.

Driscoll Children's Hospital

Corpus Christi, TX

\$455,208

Areas Served: Atascosa, Brooks, Dimmit, Duval, Frio, Hidalgo, Jim Hogg, Jim Wells, La Salle, Nueces, Medina, Maverick, San Patricio, Starr, Uvalde, Val Verde, Webb, Zavala Counties

Contact: Lori Maiolo

Telephone: 361-694-4565

Fax: 361-694-5774

Congressional District: TX-15, TX-23, TX-25, TX-27, TX-28

Telemedicine services will improve health care outcomes for rural children who suffer from heart disease, diabetes, and asthma in forty-nine communities and sixteen health clinics. The project will also provide remote diagnosis of pediatric heart disease using tele-echocardiography equipment and real-time wireless remote monitoring via telemetry units. The project will benefit almost 800 patients.

Education Service Center, Region 17

Lubbock, TX

\$291,918



Areas Served: Atascosa, Lubbock, Bailey, Floyd, Hale, Hall, Gains, Garza, Lamb, Motley, Yoakum, Terry, Parmer, Cochran, Cottle, Crosby Counties
Contact: Todd Davis
Telephone: 806-792-4000
Fax: 806-799-7953
Congressional District: TX-13, TX-19

A real-time interactive distance learning network will enrich educational offerings in the project's area, as well as provide training opportunities for teachers. The project will serve 5,252 students.

Ricardo ISD

Kingsville, TX
\$248,580
Areas Served: Kleberg County
Contact: Dr. Don Jones
Telephone: 361-592-6465
Fax: 361-592-3101
Congressional District: TX-27

Ricardo ISD will provide Internet-based interactive distance learning for students in grades 2-8, interactive career and technology development for students in grades 5-8, professional development for educators, and distance learning opportunities for community members. The project will serve 750 students, teachers, and residents of the area.

2004 Awards:

Education Service Center Region XV

San Angelo, Texas
\$462,271
Area(s) served: Runnels, Brown, Tom Green, Kimble, Edwards, San Saba, Coleman, and Sutton Counties
Contact: Donna Pohl, 325-658-6571; Fax: 325-658-6571
Congressional District(s): Applicant - TX-17; Project - TX-11, TX-17, TX-21, TX-23

The project will establish a distance learning network designed to provide educational training, career training, and career advancement opportunities to the citizens and students served by the eleven public independent school districts in the project area. Although the project is primarily designed for educational purposes it will also be made available to businesses, communities, and health care providers on an as needed basis. The project covers an area of



10,736 square miles and will serve approximately 7,600 students in eight counties.

Frank Phillips College

Borger, Texas

\$429,840

Area(s) served: Hutchinson, Lipscomb, Hartley, Ochiltree, Hansford, Sherman and Dallam Counties

Contact: Dr. Luis Morton, 806-274-5311; Fax: 806-274-9834

Congressional District(s): TX-13

Frank Phillips College will establish a distance learning network, providing educational training, career training, and career advancement opportunities to the citizens and students served by the eight rural school districts and two college campuses in the project area. The system will allow interactive connectivity to provide educational content for students, teachers and the community. The project covers an area of 7,511 square miles and will serve approximately 5,000 students in seven counties.

Christus St. Michael Health System

Texarkana, Texas

\$500,000

Area(s) served: Bowie County, TX; Little River County, AR; Sevier County, AR; McCurtain County, OK;

Contact: Chris Karam 903-614-2001; Fax: 903-614-2030

Congressional District(s): TX01, OK05, AR04

Christus St. Michael Health System has formed an alliance with Little River Memorial Hospital in Ashdown, Arkansas, De Queen Regional Medical Center in De Queen, Arkansas, and Southeast Oklahoma Outpatient Rehabilitation Center in Idabel, Oklahoma. The project will use a teleradiology system to link the end-user sites in Arkansas and Oklahoma to the St. Michael Health System in Texarkana, Texas. Telemedicine and videoconferencing capabilities will be available at each of the three end-user sites, using and will utilize existing Internet capabilities. More than 63,000 residents in the three-county project area will benefit from this system.

2003 Awards:

Internet Broadcast Corporation; Dallas, Texas

\$6,789,559 Loan



Area(s) served: Counties of Anderson, Cherokee, Gregg, Henderson, Hunt, Hopkins, Kaufman, Panola, Rusk, Smith, Titus, Upshur, Van Zandt, and Wood.
Contact: Mr. Harish Patel (214) 343-7200; FAX (214) 343-7277

Internet Broadcast Corporation (IBC) will use Rural Utilities Service Distance Learning and Telemedicine Loan funds to provide wireless distance learning services to rural students, teachers, schools, and universities in Northeast Texas. IBC is working with two partners, SUPERNet, a consortium of 17 rural school districts in the East Texas area, and The Northeast Texas Network Consortium (N.E.T.net), comprised of 15 higher education institutions, that will provide the educational content. IBC proposes to set up 7 wireless hubs that will serve the students and teachers of 69 rural schools and colleges in the northeastern portion on Texas. IBC initially intends to reach 7,755 distance learning customers and 1,270 other customers. By the end of year 5, IBC intends to be serving 14,185 distance learning customers and 3,571 other customers. This number includes approximately 3,878 disadvantaged students who will have the opportunity to receive free access to the schools' virtual private network so that they can reach school resources from their homes. Computers will be available at the schools for these students to check out. In addition, 125 teachers will receive free two-way broadband services in their homes. The schools and colleges will also receive free broadband wireless service. Some of the schools' current T-1 connections are at full capacity and are not sufficient to provide additional distance learning services. IBC's system will allow for video conferencing without compromising other functions of the network.

Coastal Bend College, Beeville, TX

\$475,000

Area(s) Served: Counties of Bee, Jim Wells, Kleberg, Atascosa, and Live Oak
Contact: Elizabeth Richmond (361) 354-2509; Fax: (361) 354-2577
Congressional District(s): 15th 27th and 28th

Coastal Bend College intends to use RUS funding for a distance learning project that will serve four college campuses with 3,694 enrolled students, 35 school districts with a school age population of 45,000 students, 6,623 school district employees, 3,166 teachers, 925 paraprofessionals, and 197,000 residents in a nine county area.

The project is designed to provide CBC with maximum flexibility in efficiently and economically utilizing its teaching staff to provide course offerings on a timely basis to each of CBC's four campuses.

Additionally, the project will expand the number of classes offered, provide business technology students with access to business and information technology, as well as provide student with greater flexibility and the best opportunity to complete their chosen degree plan.



Education Service Center Region XI; Fort Worth, TX

\$500,000

Area(s) Served: Counties of Zavala, Nueces, Tarrant, San Patricio, Medina, Uvalde, Jim Wells, Johnson, Erath, Cooke, Palo Pinto, Wise and Parker

Contact: Richard Ownby (817) 740-3689; Fax: (817) 740-7600

Congressional District(s): Applicant: 12th; Project: 4th, 6th, 12th, 15th, 17th, 23rd, and 27th

The Education Service Center Region XI will utilize RUS grant funds for a distance learning project designed to enable students and faculty at rural districts to have access to additional quality educational courses, staff development, and resources, thus improving their ability to compete in a global environment.

Region XI serves 78 independent school districts with approximately 431,000 students and 36,000 educators.

Mt. Pleasant Independent School District; Mt. Pleasant, TX

\$441,426

Area(s) Served: Counties of Bowie, Camp, Cass, Delta, Franklin, Hopkins, Lamar, Marion, Morris, Red River, and Titus

Contact: Kenneth A. English (903) 575-2000; Fax: (903) 575-2014

Congressional District(s): 1st

The Mt. Pleasant Independent School District will utilize RUS grant funds in a collaborative distance education project to link 43 school districts. Over 4,000 educators in the local rural schools will have access to higher education video conferences and over 55,000 students and adults in the various communities will gain access to college courses, continuing education, adult literacy, specialized training, and other services.

Newton Economic Development Corporation; Newton, TX

\$500,000

Area(s) Served: Counties of Cherokee, Jasper, Newton, Rusk, Sabine, Tyler, Van Zandt, and Wood

Contact: Todd Witt (903) 569-8703; Fax: (903) 560-8703

Congressional District(s): 1st, 2nd and 4th

Newton Economic Development Corp. will utilize RUS funding to develop a scalable model in eight rural East Texas counties that will address the needs outlined by the Rural Entrepreneurship Academy. The Rural Entrepreneurship Support Network (RESN) will be created to provide regional capacity to support rural entrepreneurs in distance learning and community utilization of technology. Additionally, support for regional training hubs that market and coordinate training and technical support in e-commerce and specific training related to specific training related to certain industry sectors will be established. The project



will also establish local capacity for rural entrepreneurs to access distance learning through the creation of community access points which will provide community members with on-line access to information related to post-secondary education and technical support.

Region XIV Education Service Center; Abilene, TX

\$500,000

Area(s) Served: Counties of Callahan, Comanche, Eastland, Fisher, Haskell, Jones, Mitchell, Nolan, Scurry, Shackelford, Stephens, Stonewall, and Taylor

Contact: Tommy Bearden (325) 675-8668; Fax: (325) 675-8659

Congressional District(s): 17th

Region XIV Education is the service center for forty-three school districts in west central Texas and is located in Abilene. It is a member of the West Texas Telecommunications Consortium, which coordinates and facilitates the operation of the regional network. The applicant serves 13 counties and 148 campuses. The project will expand an existing distance learning network to include the Lab Solution portable set top video conferencing system to enable the schools to conduct hands-on laboratory and shop type classes. The additional equipment will be placed in twenty-five of the districts. The objectives of the project are to allow schools to expand the distance learning network to include laboratory and shop type classes, in addition to the traditional lecture type classes. Equipment will also be installed in the Grace Museum in Taylor, Texas, to enable virtual field trip content from the museum to the schools. The number of students the addition of equipment will benefit are 22,700 at the 25 sites that will receive equipment and a total of 31,836 middle and elementary students and 12, 582 high school students in the entire Region 14 area. The general population of the Region 14 area is 259,535. Benefits for the community members are also proposed through job training and continuing education courses.

2002 Awards:

Cypress Valley Alliance: Jefferson, Texas

\$500,000 Grant

Area(s) Served: Avinger, Ben Wheeler, Berryville, Bullard, Cauga, Daingerfield, Edom, Frankston, Gladewater, Hawkins, Hugh Springs, Jacksonville, Jefferson, Mineola, Montalba, Lonestar, Neches, Ore City, Palestine, Pittsburg, Quitman, Recklaw, Rusk, Santa Anna, Starrville, Whitehorse, Wills Point, Winona

Contact: Jesse M. DeWare (903) 665-2700; Fax: (903) 665-1847

Congressional District(s): 1st & 4th

The Cypress Valley Alliance will use RUS grant funds to expand upon existing networks in East Texas to utilize them for distance learning purposes. The grantee will acquire and install computer equipment for the participating partners,



provide technical support and education for those partners and instruct them on the use of the equipment. The nonprofit organizations, YMCA's, churches, colleges and K-12 schools, serving as project partners will tailor programs to meet their individual needs. The project will use the internet to deliver services to the end users. Nearly 50 communities will be served through 25 end user sites. A full range of services will be available to approximately 350,000 rural residents of East Texas.

Texas A & M University; Laredo, TX

\$497,000 Grant

Area(s) Served: Counties of Dimmit, LaSalle, Zavala, Frio, Duval, Jim Hogg, Zapata, Webb

Contact: Dr. Willie N. Cargill (956) 326-2790; Fax: (956) 326-2789

Congressional District(s): Applicant 23rd / Project 23rd and 28th

Texas A & M University will use RUS grant funds to complete work on a distance learning network that was partially funded by a grant from the State of Texas. Funding from that grant built most of the wireless infrastructure for a distance learning project in eight counties that connected eleven high schools and one community center to the university. The RUS grant will be used to provide interactive video equipment to three of the schools that the State grant did not adequately provide for and additional equipment for the university so that more classes can be made available to residents. The population of this extremely rural area of South Texas, close to the Mexican border, is mainly Hispanic. The people here have historically been under served and are in need of the most basic types of education including English language courses. Over 35 percent of the population lives below the poverty level and per capita income ranges from \$11,000 to \$17,000. This project will offer hope of a better life to residents of this area by offering a wide range of courses that include language, job skill training and life enhancement. The project will also address the need for teacher certification courses. This program will provide distance opportunities for 8,358 high school students in 12 school districts.

Palo Alto College; San Antonio, Texas

\$257,760 Grant

Area(s) Served: Towns of Falls City, McMullen & Marion

Contact: Robert Garza, (210) 921-5494; Fax: (210) 921-5481

Congressional District(s): 15th, 20th, 21st, 23rd, 28th

Palo Alto College, a federally designated Hispanic Servicing Institution, will accept RUS grant funds, on behalf of the three (3) high schools to deliver educational and distance learning opportunities in rural south central Texas. The College will provide interactive video conferencing and computer equipment to the three (3) rural high schools that do not have access to the technology



necessary for a dual course credit distance learning program and community activities. The College will also provide the necessary equipment and systems to the high schools which will improve the quality of education for students as well as enhance community outreach efforts. Emphasis will be placed on addressing the career, educational, health and technological needs of the participants. Specific benefits include lifetime learning, adult education, career development, information exchange with other communities, access to local and global networks, and use of current technology. It is expected that the project will benefit over 275 rural students.

Education Service Center, Region 2:

Corpus Christi, TX

\$499,473 Grant;

Area(s) Served: Towns of San Diego, Alice, Ben Bolt, Kingsville, Premont, Rios, Conception, Ramirez, Realitos, and Freer in Duval County and the Towns of Bishop, Alice, Agua Dulce, Banquette, Chapman Ranch, Robstown, and Corpus Christi in Nueces County;

Contact: Andrea Avery (361) 561-8446; Fax: (361) 561-8455;

Congressional District(s): Applicant: 27th / Project: 15th, 27th, 28th.

The Educational Service Center, Region 2 will use RUS grant funds to provide affordable technologies and a network infrastructure for two (2) remote rural school districts, Benevides ISD and Driscoll ISD, in south Texas to share educational and health care resources. Specifically, videoconferencing equipment will be purchased to receive educational content as well as upgrade the current network infrastructure to allow interconnectivity with other school districts and college programs throughout the state. The educational needs of the two school districts and the surrounding communities will be met by providing students, teachers, parents, nurses, coaches, faculty and community members more quality resources. GED, college, high school and elementary curriculum, as well as professional development, disease awareness and medical education courses will be offered. Virtual tours, meetings, and medical lectures will also be available. The project is expected to benefit over 800 students, 65 teachers, and 1,600 rural residents.

Odem-Edroy Independent School District; Odem, Texas

\$500,000 Grant

Area(s) Served: San Patricio County Towns of Oden, Edroy and Sinton

Contact: Charles H. Zepeda (361) 368-2561; Fax: (361) 368-2879

Congressional District(s): Applicant and Project: 15th

Oden-Edroy Independent School District will use RUS grant funds to develop a system of distance learning opportunities. Specific benefits to be gained through this project over a three year period include: (1) Shared delivery of at least six (6)



high school level courses; (2) Increased access to distance learning field trips; (3) Development of concurrent enrollment courses for high school students to earn college credits and complete vocational certificated programs; (4) Increased interactive communication with governmental and social service agencies through scheduled videoconference sessions; (5) Business development through collaboration with the Small Business Development Center and the Texas Agricultural Extension Service; and, (6) Expanded use of existing educational facilities through evening, weekend, and summer programs. The project will use the existing State of Texas Telecommunication System (TEX-AN 2000) which will provide the school districts full access to the statewide "network of networks" that include hundreds of K-12 schools, colleges and universities, and public agencies. The outreach elements of this project will assist in bringing new services to Sinton, Odem and Edroy which directly benefit approximately: (1) 10,000 residents through increase access to government and community based organization services; (2) 3300 students enrolled in three (3) elementary schools, two (2) junior high/middle schools, and two (2) high schools in the combined Sinton/Odem-Edroy school districts; (3) 45 students who will participate in alternative education; and, (4) 30 adults who will made a transition from certification to advance education.

Taft Independent School District

Taft, TX

\$450,595 Grant

Area(s) Served: Taft in San Patricio County

Contact: Don Madden (361) 528-2636; Fax: (361) 528-2223

Congressional District(s): 15th

Taft Independent School District will use RUS grant funds for a distance learning project. The project goals are to: (1) Provide students with an enriched curriculum through advanced courses and other activities; (2) Improve access to educational resource for all students and other citizens in Taft through additional videoconferencing and Internet capabilities; and, (3) Improve the effectiveness of educators by providing them access to additional staff development opportunities and online resources. There are four (4) end-user sites: two (2) elementary schools, one (1) junior high school, and one (1) senior high school which will serve approximately 1300 students, 230 teachers and staff members, and 150 community members. Educational services will be offered by Texas A&M University, Del Mar College, Education Service Center II, Center for Distance Learning Research at Texas A&M University, the Texas Agricultural Extension Service San Patricio County Office a, and Taft ISD. The types of services to be offered include: interactive distance learning, electronic research, information exchange, continuing professional development for educators, and adult and community education. RUS grant funds will assist Taft Independent School District with the purchase of equipment necessary to make communication more feasible. Items requested include SMART Boards, wireless videoconferencing



units, a classroom videoconferencing unit, wireless notebook mobile units, media retrieval system and 2 year subscription for interactive educational services. With a goal to reach more community end-users, Taft Independent School District will increase its connectivity adding another T-1 connection. This will allow for multiple users of video conferencing techniques. Without this upgrade, the current network will not be adequate for the demand of bandwidth necessary to run multiple video-conferences.

San Antonio College; San Antonio Texas

\$312,315 Grant

Area(s) Served: San Antonio in Bexar County; Center Point in Kerr County; Nixon-Smilely in Gonzales County; Kenedy in Karnes County; and, Comfort in Kendall County

Contact: Susan Espinoza (210) 785-6159; Fax: (210) 733-2182

Congressional District(s): Applicant: 20th / Project: 14th, 20th, 21st, 23rd, 28th

San Antonio College will use RUS grant funds to assist rural Texas communities to access enhanced educational opportunities through videoconference and web-based distance learning. At least 35 dual credit students at each of the four (4) Independent School District (ISD) end-user sites (i.e. 140 students) will be served each year by the new facilities. Additionally, it is expected that at least 25 teachers, parents and/or community members will receive advanced training, continuing education or post-secondary education at each site annually. The grant funds will be specifically used to purchase permanent and mobile computer workstations for student taking dual credit courses via the Internet and equipment to enhance their videoconferencing capabilities. Laptops will allow students to do Internet class work in libraries and at home. At San Antonio College, the project HUB site, broadcasting and educational capability will be improved with a continuous presence card, streaming video recording, video editing, and two mobile videoconferencing units for professors to use to broadcast from their classrooms. At various end-user sites, current videoconferencing and video course presentation capabilities will be enhanced and completed with video cameras, and other equipment. A full permanent videoconferencing room will be built at one site for faculty training and community use. All end-users will be linked to the hub by T-1 connections. The project service area is comprised of exceptionally rural communities with Hispanic populations between 19-65 percent, with a school population between 24-73 percent.

2001 Grant Awards:

Taft Independent School District; Taft, Texas

\$190,038 Grant

Area(s) Served: San Patricio County

Contact: Mr. Don R. Madden; (361) 528-2636, Fax: (361) 528-2223



Congressional District(s): 15th.

The Taft Independent School District located in the heart of the Texas Coastal Bend along the Gulf of Mexico is a rural farming community with a population of 3,374. This grant is to upgrade an existing distance learning system and add additional equipment to provide more adult education courses; increase videoconferencing and Internet access opportunities; and improve resources and educational opportunities to the educators. This area of Texas consists of economically disadvantaged homes and working poor, and providing the economic opportunities that education can offer is of critical need. The grant will provide financing for digital desktop videoconferencing equipment, document scanners, computers, printers, and new technology Asmart boards@ to benefit 1,473 students, as well as, the local adult community including teachers from 4 rural schools in the Taft area.

INFO-NET Consortium

Cherokee, Texas

\$463,040 Grant

Area(s) Served: Coryell, McCulloch, Lampasas, Mills, and San Saba Counties

Contact: Mr. James Ball (915) 622-4298, Fax: (915) 622-4430

Congressional District(s): Applicant/Project - 11th & 21st.

In 1994 this Consortium was established by 8 of the 12 school districts in this project, to start up a distance learning and Internet network. This locally driven project builds upon the success of the original 8-district project, and adds the other 4 districts to the Network. The purpose of this project is to increase the number of community and educational opportunities for rural, remote and underserved persons of all ages of central Texas. RUS funds will be used for connection to Central Texas College and enhancing the local area networks in the schools. The expansion of the Info-Net Network will meet the learning and information needs of 12 rural communities located in five central Texas counties. Furthermore, the expansion will enable students and community members, to whom all benefits of the system will be available, to take dual-credit courses (high school and college credit) college courses, continuing education courses, and participate in community programs. This project has the potential to benefit a student population of 4,364 at 12 school districts and an additional general population of over 8,900 people.

Odessa Emergency Providers AF, Inc.

Odessa, Texas

\$71,838 Grant

Area(s) Served: Presidio and Brewster Counties

Contact: Mr. Dave Spear; (915) 381-0203, Fax: (915) 385-1665

Congressional District(s): Applicant B 19th / Project B 23rd.



The Odessa Emergency Providers AF, Inc. (OEPAF) in cooperation with the Telingua Medics, Inc., provides Emergency Medical Services coverage for 3000 square miles of remote southern Texas called the Big Bend Region. The permanent population of this area is 2,000 people, and every year 400,000 tourists visit this region. RUS grant funds will facilitate use of a satellite radio system to improve emergency medical care by connecting doctors to ambulances en route.

In addition, the portability of the project allows for the equipment to be set up at fixed sites, for continuing education and distance learning classes in emergency medical services. This project will benefit 5 local paramedics as well as emergency telemedicine services to the local and tourist population of this Region.

Texas A&M University-Kingsville; Kingsville, Texas

\$195,500 Grant

Area(s) Served: Duval and Brooks Counties

Contact: Ms. Sandra Rexroat; (361) 593-3344; FAX: (361) 593-3409

Congressional Districts: 15th, 27th, & 28th

Texas A&M University intends to use RUS grant funds for a distance learning project that will provide rural areas of South Texas with advanced information technology in order to provide educational opportunities and job training. The hub site for the project is the Distance Learning Center at Texas A&M University-Kingsville. The two end-user sites, San Diego ISD High School in Duval County and Brooks ISD Middle School in Brooks County, will consist of a classroom/laboratory local area network (LAN) based on microcomputers that can communicate globally with voice, video, text, graphics, and data. Each end-user will also have two way audio and video interactive videoconference equipment. These facilities will be used to address needs identified in the individual communities, as follows: (1) K-12 education- standard, remedial, and advanced placement; (2) higher education- undergraduate, graduate, and teacher certification; (3) adult and continuing education- GED, workforce development, and life-long learning; and (4) job searching. Specifically, college level courses will be made available to more people with greater regularity and with greatly reduced travel expense. This project will benefit the 3,350 students enrolled in these two school districts and will also positively impact over 10,770 people living in these two rural counties.

Texas Family Health Network, Inc.; Plainview, Texas

\$494,927 Grant

Area(s) Served: Briscoe, Lamb, Parmer, Swisher, and Randall Counties



Contact: Dr. Sidney Ontai; (806) 293-2270, FAX: (806) 296-7990
Congressional Districts: 13th & 19th

The Texas Family Health Network, under the direction of Dr. Sidney Ontai, plans to use RUS grant funds, along with matching funds, to purchase telemedicine equipment with video capable computers along with medical diagnostic equipment. The telemedicine units will be placed in the offices of specialists and primary care physicians at the hub site located in Plainview, Texas. This will increase primary care and specialty coverage and will include general surgery, ophthalmology, and cardiology as well as family practice with obstetrics. A virtual pharmacy@ will be added to six (6) end-user site clinics covering nearly 11,000 square miles with over 7,000 rural residents.

Scott and White Memorial Hospital and Scott Sherwood and Brindley Foundation

Temple, Texas

\$335,402 Grant

Area(s) served: Williamson, Bosque, Burnet, Lano, Bell, and Coryell Counties

Contact: Dr. Greg Hobbs; (254) 724-9827; FAX: (254) 724-1044

Congressional Districts: 11th, 14th, and 21st

The goal of the Central Texas Diabetes Care Telemedicine Project is to provide a specialized team approach to rural diabetics in central Texas through a telemedicine network. This network will link a team of diabetes specialists at Scott & White Memorial Hospital in Temple, Texas with primary care clinics in the five rural communities of Taylor, Horseshoe Bay, Georgetown, Gatesville, and Clifton, Texas. By providing access to specialty care to these rural diabetic patients, this project will help reduce the complications caused by diabetes. An estimated 4,270 diabetic patients will benefit from this project.

Hill College

Hillsboro, Texas

\$176,266 Grant

Area(s) Served: Bosque, Hill, Hood, Johnson and Somervell Counties

Contact: Mr. Joe Shaughnessy; Phone: (254) 582-2555, ext. 240; Fax: (254) 582-7591

Congressional Districts: Applicant B 11th and Project - 6th, 11th, 12th, & 17th

Hill College is a publicly funded 2-year community college located in Hillsboro, Texas. Hill College proposes to create a distance learning network to deliver academic, vocational and continuing education coursework to the smaller school districts in the surrounding service area. The school districts targeted for this project include: Blum, Bynum, Cranfills Gap, Glen Rose, Godley, Iredell, Keene, Kopperl, Lipan, Meridian, Morgan, Penelope, Valley Mills, Venus and Walnut Springs. All of these schools possess an Interactive Television (ITV) classroom



connected into their regional K-12 Educational Service Center (ESC). The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Distance Learning Grant funds in conjunction with matching funds from Hill College, will provide for the installation of 3 distance learning classrooms that will connect to the existing regional ESC network. Two classrooms will be located on the Johnson County campus and serve the Johnson, Hood and Somervell counties. One classroom will be located on the Hillsboro campus and serve Hill and Bosque counties. The anticipated benefits include providing college credit courses to the targeted high schools using the Hill College faculty; and delivering workforce training and vocational courses to students in areas of childcare, health technician and information processing fields.

Texana Mental Health and Mental Retardation Center

Rosenberg, Texas

Grant Amount \$66,800

Counties Served: Austin, Colorado, Fort Bend, Matagorda, Waller and Wharton Counties

Contact Person: James A. Lokey, Ed.D; Phone Number: (979) 865-3621, ext. 131, Fax Number: (979) 865-5236

Congressional Districts: 8th, 14th, and 22nd.

Texana Mental Health and Mental Retardation Center (MHMR), a non-profit service delivery system that provides treatment and services to approximately 4,698 individuals with mental illness, mental retardation, autism, or pervasive developmental disorder in six counties, was awarded a \$66,800 Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Grant. The primary objective of the project is to supplement existing medical services such as counseling with immediate access to a psychiatric practitioner. The project will also provide distance learning opportunities that will be used for teaching and file sharing purposes among MHMR staff. RUS grant funds will be used to purchase basic hardware and software to equip the hub location, Rosenberg, and the four end user sites, Bay City, Columbus, Hempstead and Wharton with interactive conferencing technology. The anticipated benefits from the project will enable MHMR to: (1) provide patients with improved care; (2) training for medical and general staff at their own clinical location thereby reducing travel and distance time; and, (3) recruit practitioners more effectively and reduce practitioner isolation.

2000 Awards:

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY, Abilene, Texas

\$349,178 Grant

Area(s) served: Baylor, Brown, Coleman, Comanche, Eastland, Ector, Erath, Fisher, Hamilton, Haskell, Howard, Jack, Jones, Knox, Lubbock, Martin,



McCulloch, Midland, Mitchell, Nolan, Runnels, Scurry, Stephens, Stonewall, Taylor, Throckmorton, Wilbarger and Young Counties
Contact: Ms. Shawna Dowell, (915) 674-2770; FAX: (915) 674-6717
Congressional District: 17th

Abilene Christian University (ACU) in conjunction with the Abilene Intercollegiate School of Nursing (AISN), plans to utilize distance learning to educate the local West Texas registered nurses and nursing graduates. The distance learning project will enable these health professionals to have, at a minimum, a Bachelors in Nursing degree, as well as experience in using telemedicine equipment and related application skills. The proposed "RN to BSN/BAS Nursing Degree Completion Program via Distance Learning" is a two-phase process. Phase One involves ACU and AISN obtaining a distance learning facility at each campus and connecting both facilities to each other through the SCATE/GSC statewide videoconferencing network. Phase Two consists of the integration of telemedicine applications into all of AISN's nursing programs. The Rural Utilities Service Distance Learning Grant funds will enable rural, nontraditional and traditional nursing students to overcome the geographic and economic barriers that students encounter when they commute over 150 miles roundtrip to access higher education opportunities in metropolitan areas.

CHOPRA IMAGING CENTERS, INC.

Houston, Texas

\$341,250 Grant

Area(s) served: Crane, Dimmitt, Montague, Red River and Wichita Counties

Contact: Eric Cleckler, (713) 790-1666; FAX: (713) 790-1307

Congressional District: Applicant – 25th and Project – 23rd, 1 and 13

Chopra Imaging Centers, Inc. (Chopra), a new venture established to address the growing needs of rural hospitals, plans to provide teleradiology services to the rural Texas hospitals: Crane Memorial, Dimmitt County Memorial, Electra Memorial, Nocona General and East Texas Medical Center-Clarksville. Each of the 5 hospital sites will be provided Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) over T-1 line connectivity and a desktop teleradiology system with store-and-forward capabilities. Chopra will utilize the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Telemedicine Grant funds to provide training in teleradiology, educational opportunities and oversight regarding use and maintenance of the teleradiology network. Through the use of RUS Telemedicine Grant funds for the teleradiology network, Chopra can provide 24 hours a day, 7 days a week coverage that will: (1) Save thousands of dollars due to the elimination of unnecessary transporting of patients an hour and a half away to tertiary care facilities; (2) Create a faster turn around time for reports which, in turn, lead to earlier diagnosis and subsequent treatment for patients; and, (3) Potentially provide thousands of residents with health care services previously available only to urban areas.



MCMULLEN COUNTY INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Tilden, Texas

\$58,775 Grant

Area(s) served: McMullen County

Contact: Mr. Frank Franklin, (361) 274-3315; FAX: (361) 274-3665

Congressional District: 28th

McMullen Independent School District, located in McMullen County southwest of San Antonio, Texas, proposes to serve 59 students in 50 households and 34 additional students who are siblings to the participants, with the purchase of computers for the home. The Rural Utilities Service Distance Learning Grant funds in conjunction with matching funds from the school district and the Valley Telephone Cooperative, Inc., will provide high school students with computers at home, laptop computers to teachers, and place computers in the school's library and parent center for community resident use. The school district will create its own Virtual Private Network (VPN), which will enable the students to connect to the school district network from the home via the Internet. The VPN would allow students to the school district's Local Area Network (LAN). The LAN would allow connectivity to the Wide Area Network, also known as the WAN. The Rural Utilities Service Distance Learning Grant funds will provide for continuous educational opportunities through dynamic interaction among students, teachers, parents and the extended community. The anticipated benefits derived from this project include a more literate community, which can equate to a better economy for approximately 1400 residents.

SAN PERLITA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

San Perlita, Texas

\$69,200 Grant

Area(s) served: Willacy County

Contact: Mr. Eugenio Guterrez, (956) 248-5563; FAX: (956) 248-5561

Congressional Districts: 27th

San Perlita Independent School District, located in south Texas, the Willacy County, the Rio Grande Valley, next to the Gulf of Mexico, proposes to serve 83 students in 71 households and 78 additional students who are siblings to the participants with the purchase of computers for the home. The Rural Utilities Service Distance Learning Grant funds in conjunction with matching funds from the school district and the Valley Telephone Cooperative, Inc., will provide high school students with computers at home, laptop computers to teachers, and place computers in the school's library and parent center for community resident use. The school district will create its own Virtual Private Network (VPN), which will enable the students to connect to the school district network from the home via the Internet. The VPN would allow students to the school district's Local Area Network (LAN). The LAN would allow connectivity to the Wide Area Network, also known as the WAN. The Rural Utilities Service Distance Learning Grant



funds will provide for continuous educational opportunities through dynamic interaction among students, teachers, parents and the extended community. The anticipated benefits derived from this project include a more literate community, which can equate to a better economy for approximately 1400 residents.

SAN ISIDRO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

San Isidro, Texas

\$71,800 Grant

Area(s) served: Starr County

Contact: Mr. Hilario Alvarado, Jr., (956) 481-3631; FAX: (956) 481-3950

Congressional Districts: 28th

San Isidro Independent School District, located in south Texas, Starr County, proposes to serve 87 students in 69 households and 43 additional students who are siblings to the participants with the purchase of computers for the home. The Rural Utilities Service Distance Learning Grant funds in conjunction with matching funds from the school district and the Valley Telephone Cooperative, Inc., will provide high school students with computers at home, laptop computers to teachers, and place computers in the school's library and parent center for community resident use. The school district will create its own Virtual Private Network (VPN), which will enable the students to connect to the school district network from the home via the Internet. The VPN would allow students to the school district's Local Area Network (LAN). The LAN would allow connectivity to the Wide Area Network, also known as the WAN. The Rural Utilities Service Distance Learning Grant funds will provide for continuous educational opportunities through dynamic interaction among students, teachers, parents and the extended community. The anticipated benefits derived from this project include a more literate community, which can equate to a better economy for approximately 750 residents.

TAFT INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Taft, Texas

\$348,544 Grant

Areas served: San Patricio County

Contact: Mr. Don R. Madden, (361) 528-2636; FAX: (361) 528-2223

Congressional District: TX 15th

The Taft Independent School District located, in the heart of the Texas Coastal Bend along the Gulf of Mexico, is a rural farming community with a population of 3,374. This area of Texas has an exceptionally high percentage of economically disadvantaged homes and working poor, making students academically at-risk in their educational experience. Taft has seen the results of providing students opportunities for learning through distance technologies. RUS distance learning funds will allow Taft ISD to provide additional distance learning opportunities for



its students, teachers, parents, and other community members. The new equipment will be used for multiple purposes: to extend, enhance, and improve pre-K through 12 education; to provide additional professional development opportunities for teachers; to provide adult and continuing education opportunities for the community; and to expand outside connections to the Trans-Texas Videoconferencing Network for students in very rural areas. The grant will provide financing for videoconferencing equipment, computers, printers, software for library/media centers; and upgraded network connections to benefit 1,473 students, as well as, the local adult community including teachers from 4 rural schools in the Taft area.

THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER RESEARCH FOUNDATION

College State, Texas

\$349,500 Grant

Area(s) served: Brazos, Burleson, Madison, and Robertson Counties

Contact: Ms. Charlene Miller, (409) 845-3806; FAX: (409) 845-7143

Congressional District: TX 8th

The Texas A&M University System Health Science Center Research Foundation is a partner in the Brazos Valley Telehealth Partnership (BVTP). The BVTP network includes a tertiary hospital, three rural hospitals, and eight rural clinics, four of which are the remote sites in this project. BVTP will use advanced telehealth technologies in order to improve health care access and education for under served rural residents of Central Texas. BVTP will make available to the sites in the project, patient education, continuing medical education, and allied health professional training that exist from the individual partners' facilities of BVTP. The project will also provide emergency room support at multiple rural locations using non-emergency medicine physicians or other appropriate medical staff at the remote emergency rooms supported by emergency medicine physicians elsewhere. The four rural sites are in Caldwell, Madisonville, Franklin and Somerville and serve a population of 11,246 residents. The project includes the financing of training, computers and peripheral equipment, workstations, software, modems, cameras, and telemedicine and networking equipment.

1999 Awards:

Sidney Ontai, M.D. Association

Plainview, Texas

\$56,818 Loan/\$5,682 Grant

Serving the counties of Briscoe, Hale, and Hall

Contact: Dr. Sidney C. Ontai

Phone: 806-293-2270, FAX 806-293-5153

Congressional District: 13th. Area(s) served: Maverick County



The Sidney Onatai, M.D. Association, a family physicians service entity that operates from facilities adjacent to a 100-bed hospital in Plainview, Texas, has been awarded grant and loan funds from the Rural Utilities Service Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program to assist with improving health care services to rural residents of Texas. The funds will be used to establish a satellite clinic, in cooperation with the Town of Turkey, Texas, to improve access to full service family and emergency care for approximately 514 residents of this town, and the rural farming counties Briscoe and Hall. An additional 1,500 residents in the surrounding communities of Silverton and Quitaque will also be served.

Specifically, the clinic in Turkey will be utilized by end-user site paramedical personnel in communication with a physician or mid-level provider from the hub-site through a single line telephone care system and an automated medication-dispensing machine. This equipment can be connected to a POTS line for transmitting to the hub. The clinic will use stand alone peripheral equipment to do blood and urine tests and dispense medications from the hub to the end user by direct communication with physicians and mid-level providers.

The Town of Turkey initiated contact with the applicant and continues to take steps to see that the project will be successful. One such effort is to reduce the operation cost for the clinic by providing office space to house the clinic. By doing so, the Town believes that this will afford the project an opportunity to succeed and the residents in this rural farming area of Texas will have access to much needed continuous health care services. If successful, the applicant plans to establish more of these clinics in communities within a 100-mile radius of Plainview that serves over 15,000 residents.

Maverick County Hospital District d/b/a Ft. Duncan Medical Center

Eagle Pass, Texas

\$348,434 Grant

Area(s) served: Maverick County

Contact: Mr. Don B. Williams, (830) 757-7501: Fax (830) 757-1857

The Ft. Duncan Medical Center plans to expand on the existing videoconferencing and networking equipment for importing and exporting allied health care programs, and for creation of a link to export digital medical images for sub-specialty consulting on rare or complicated cases. This phase of the project will consist of network interfacing, an additional radiologist and workstation; providing additional diagnostic tools; radiography units; and digital image storage. The project will include the communities of Eagle Pass, Quamado, Seco Mines, El Indio, and the Kickapoo Indian Nation Reservation. The area to be served includes 36,120 residents.



Cypress Valley Alliance, Inc., Cypress Valley Education Center

Jefferson, Texas

\$345,275 Grant

Counties Served: Marion, Bowie, Trinity, Polk, San Jacinto, Upshur

Contact: Todd Witt, (903) 665-2700: Fax (903) 665-1847

Cypress Valley Alliance, Inc. (CVA), a non-profit agency, in partnership with Texas A&M University-Texarkana (TAMU-T) plan to use RUS grant funds to expand the environmental education capabilities of the Cypress Valley Education Center (CVEC) to allow the Center to deliver educational programs into rural communities. The proposed project will also address the teacher shortage problem in the region in the areas of science and technology. The CVEC was recently constructed to serve as a hub for environmental education so that citizens could make informed decisions about the use of natural resources. Implementation of the project will expand the educational impact of the CVEC from one day field trips to 1-2 month curriculum interactions via web-based and interactive video with communities throughout the region. It will also engage students in hands on applications of science, technology, and teaching. Students will have access to the vast library resources of the TAMU system as well as credit courses via distance learning. Classroom teachers will also have access to on-going training through the network. The project will serve five communities and 8000 rural residents.

Midland College

Midland, Texas

Grant Amount: \$345,800

Counties Served: Crockett, Pecos, Reagan & Upton

Contact Person: Dr. Camile Duchesne, (915) 685-4516: Fax (915) 685-4714

Midland College, a community college that serves the city of Midland (population 106,611) and five counties (population 142,026), plans to provide distance learning opportunities to the residents of western Texas via interactive video and computer data communications. The proposed telecommunications system will use interactive video units, an enlarged video conferencing hub, and specialized data routing equipment to expand video instructional offerings, both academic and technical, between Midland College and the five end user sites, Fort Stockton RTTC, Iraan High School, Ozona High School, Reagan County High School and Rankin High School. The Rural Utilities Service grant will help enable many rural West Texans to participate in educational opportunities and job training activities by providing (1) more diverse Internet course offerings; (2) professional teacher education and staff development for junior, senior and graduate courses; (3) non-college level credit courses, i.e., General Education Development (GED), English as a Second Language (ESL), and college preparatory or remedial courses in subjects such as math, reading and writing.



Hill-Navarro Electronic Consortium, Inc

Dawson, Texas

\$245,500 Grant

Counties Served: Navarro and Hill

Contact: Dr. Wayne Matthews, (254) 576-2564: FAX (254) 576-5019

The Hill-Navarro Electronic Consortium, Inc. (Hill-Navarro) was formed to meet the learning and informational needs of the residents of six rural school districts located in north central Texas. The six independent school districts consist of Blooming Grove, Bynum, Dawson, Frost, Hubbard and Penelope and will benefit approximately 2,517 students and 4,257 rural residents in these districts. Hill-Navarro proposes to upgrade its existing analog infrastructure to a digital infrastructure in order to provide educational, health, library, and government services to area students and community members through the use of two-way, interactive video equipment.

1998 Awards:

Maverick County Hospital District d/b/a Fort Duncan Medical Center

\$326,484 Grant

Location: Eagle Pass, Texas

Area(s) served: Maverick

Contact Don B. Williams

Telephone Number: (830) 757-7501

Fax Number: (830) 757-1857

Congressional District: 23rd.

Maverick County is one of the poorest counties in Texas and the nation. The Hospital District does not have enough beds for the demands of the community and there is a severe shortage of nurses to staff more patient beds. Ninety percent of the clinic patients have household incomes below poverty level. RUS grant funds will be used to provide telemedicine and distance learning capabilities between Fort Duncan Medical Center and the new Rosita Valley Clinic intended to serve the colonias in Maverick County and the Traditional Kickapoo Tribe of Texas. In the first year of the project, it is expected that 1,200 interactive and asynchronous telemedicine consults will be completed and the number of patients receiving specialized medical care will increase by 25 percent. The number of residents that will benefit from this project is 36,120.

Texas A & M Research Foundation

\$141,000 Grant

Location: College Station, Texas

Area(s) served: Willacy, Dallas

Contact Mr. Glen E. Goodin



Telephone Number: (409) 845-8626
Fax Number: (409) 845-7143
Congressional District(s): 3rd, 8th, 27th
Other: EZ/EC.

The Sebastian Community of Willacy County is located in a designated Empowerment Zone of south Texas. This rural community consists of several unincorporated colonia settlements which lack such basic infrastructure as water and sewer systems and paved roads. The intent of the Sebastian TeleHealth Model program to be funded by the grant awarded to the Texas A&M Research Foundation is to implement telemedicine/ teledentistry in this impoverished area and to advance knowledge and public awareness of common diseases, nutrition, food safety and adverse environmental conditions. Workstations for telemedicine/teledentistry and distance learning will be installed at Martin Cavazos Center for Education and Community Advancement and at the Layford Independent School District. As a result of this program, 1700 K-12 students will receive medical and dental health screenings.

Stamford County Line Independent School District

\$167,457 Grant
Location: Stamford, Texas
Area(s) served: Jones, Haskell
Contact Mr. Robert Damron
Telephone Number: (915) 773-2705
Fax Number: (915) 773-5684
Congressional District: 17th.

The Stamford County Line Independent School District distance learning project establishes a community life long learning center for Stamford, Texas and the surrounding area. Interactive video and the Internet will deliver courses to elementary students, at risk students and adults. Adult education, work force training and professional development will also be provided to this extremely rural area. Stamford ISD plans to use existing facilities and integrate new technology to add fifteen workstations in the Wetherbee School with Internet access and PLATO Internet. With project funds, Wetherbee will become a multi-technology teaching and learning center for Stamford and the surrounding counties.

Mason Independent School District

\$346,111 Grant
Location: Mason, Texas
Area(s) served: Mason and Menard
Contact Ms. Janet Schmidt
Telephone Number: (915) 347-8261
Fax Number: (915) 347-8247



Congressional District(s): 21st.

This project includes the completion of the physical cabling infrastructure and the addition of VTEL videoconferencing units for Mason ISD and Menard ISD as well as 24 computers for each district. Mason and Menard are isolated rural farming communities located in the Hill Country of Texas. The students will use distance learning to exchange ideas, share projects, experience global interaction with other students, participate in discussion groups and make presentations. With RUS funding for distance learning, Mason looks forward to the prospect of expanding the We Can TOO (Technology On-Line Outreach) Project with Menard and other schools across the state, throughout the United States, and around the world. The We Can TOO is being mentored by the Youth Can project that received national attention from the CBS Charles Osgood Files. The purpose of the Mason project is to fully integrate technology into teaching and learning with whole class cross-disciplinary research projects that work to solve real world problems. These projects are instrumental in helping the students become technologically literate by the beginning of the 21st century.

Southwest Texas Junior College

\$350,000 Grant

Location: Uvalde, Texas

Area(s) served: 11 counties in Southwest Texas

Contact Mr. Blaine Bennett

Telephone Number: (830) 591-7275

Fax Number: (830) 591-7354

Congressional Districts: 23rd.

Southwest Texas Junior College is part of the Southwest Texas Network Consortium (SWTNet) which has been committed to integrate technology into teaching and learning, especially in rural areas. SWTNet has already provided shared resources via interactive videoconferencing to fifteen rural schools. The proposal made by Southwest Texas Junior College consisted of the request for RUS funds to provide videoconferencing connections and equipment to the remaining six target school districts in rural Southwest Texas. The second phase of the project will be to transition the infrastructure "backbone" to Asynchronous transfer mode (ATM) in order to improve connectivity between all twenty-one rural school districts and the outside network.

Crockett Independent School District

\$294,319 Grant

Location: Crockett, Texas

Area(s) served: Houston and Robertson

Contact Dorman Jackson

Telephone Number: (409) 544-2125

Fax Number: (409) 544-5727



Congressional District 2nd and 5th.

Crockett Independent School District (ISD) and Calvert ISD entered into a collaborative agreement to share resources through videoconferencing and other electronic means. These two rural communities have high levels of poverty and geographic isolation. Crockett ISD will use RUS grant funding to establish the basic infrastructure needed to connect the ISD's with statewide videoconferencing networks and with the global community through electronic means. A successful distance learning network will help the ISD achieve their goals of improving access to K-12 educational resources, curriculum and staff development; to provide access to higher education resources; to make the Information Superhighway available to every citizen; and to provide resources that will promote economic viability

Odem-Edroy Independent School District

\$336,740 Grant

Location: Odem, Texas

Area(s) served: San Patricio

Contact Charles H. Zepeda

Telephone Number: (512) 368-2561

Fax Number: (512)-368-2288

Congressional District: 15th.

Odem-Edroy Independent School District (ISD) serves two extremely rural, isolated agricultural communities - Odem & Edroy. The ISD wishes to create a distance learning videoconferencing network that will provide students and teachers access to academic and vocational educational programs from Del Mar College, Texas A&M University Corpus Christi, Texas A&M University Kingsville, and the Education Service Center Region II. RUS grant funds will be used to expand and improve the existing infrastructure so that all of the schools (PK-12) and the community will benefit from the increased access to educational resources. Teachers will have access to current teaching information and they will have access to other professionals in their field of study to share ideas and provide support. Community residents will have access to courses that will improve their job skills and general continuing education opportunities. The students will be able to interact with students in other districts through videoconferencing classes, "virtual field trips", and have the availability to review each others work.

Taft Independent School District

\$347,164 Grant

Location: Taft, Texas

Area(s) served: San Patricio

Contact Don R. Madden

Telephone Number: (512) 528-2636



Fax Number: (512)-528-2223
Congressional District: 15th.

Taft Independent School District (ISD) seeks to create a distance learning videoconferencing network that will provide students and teachers access to academic and vocational educational programs from Del Mar College, Texas A&M University Corpus Christi, Texas A&M University Kingsville, and the Education Service Center Region II. RUS funding will be used to expand and improve the existing infrastructure so that all of the schools (PK-12) and the community will benefit from the increased access to educational resources. Teachers will have access to current teaching information and they will have access to other professionals in their field of study to share ideas and provide support. Community residents will have access to courses that will improve their job skills and general continuing education opportunities. The students will be able to interact with students in other districts through videoconferencing classes as well as share and critique each others work.

1997 Awards:

Austwell Tivoli Independent School District

Award: \$285,427 Grant
Location: Tivoli, Texas
Area(s) Served: Cities and Counties of Refugio and Karnes
Contact Person: Bill Welkener
Telephone Number: 512-286-3212
Fax Number: 512-286-3637

Austwell Tivoli Independent School District (ISD) and Runge ISD serve extremely rural, isolated communities that suffer from loss of teachers, classes and students leaving to enter the workforce. The ISDs will use RUS funds to establish the basic infrastructure needed to connect the schools to Esconett, a statewide network of intranets that provide full data, voice and video communications among schools, education service centers and the Texas Education Agency. A successful distance learning network will help the ISDs achieve their goals of improving access to K-12 educational resources, curriculum and staff development; to provide access to higher education resources; to make the Information Superhighway available to every citizen; and to provide resources that will promote economic viability.

Morton Independent School District

Award: \$179,000 Grant
Location: Morton, Texas
Area(s) Served: County Cochran
Contact Person: Dr. Carl Craighead
Telephone Number: 512-286-3637



Fax Number: 806-266-5449

Morton Independent School District (Morton) is a small rural school that serves 716 students in Cochran County, Texas. The district has one Elementary campus (grades 1-5) and one Junior High campus (6-8) and one High School campus (9-12). The school population has declined over the past 25 years and the level of education, as well as that of the entire community is at risk for failure. Through an award of a planning grant from the Texas Education Agency in 1996, Morton became a participant in a regional distance learning planning initiative with the Five Area Community Telecommunications Consortium (FACT). FACT includes seven school districts and South Plains College and is also supported by Texas Tech University and Educational Service Center Region 17. RUS Distance Learning Grant funds will be used to complete Morton's distance learning network. This project will build on the infrastructure of the junior high school and establish a video-conference distance learning class to support enrollment, Tech Prep, vocational and postsecondary courses from South Plains Junior College. In addition, every citizen of Morton will have equitable access to education and job-related training.

Southwest Texas Junior College

Award: \$300,000 Grant

Location: Uvalde, Texas

Area(s) Served Counties of Edwards, Frio, LaSalle and Medina; Champion

Community: Uvalde, Val Verde

Contact Person: Mr. Blaine Bennett

Telephone Number: 820-591-7275

Fax Number: 830-591-7354

Southwest Texas Junior College has requested a grant in the amount of \$300,035 under the RUS Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program on behalf of Southwest Texas Network Consortium. These funds will be used to purchase interactive video-conferencing equipment for the establishment of six new distance learning facilities at Cotulla, Uvalde, Comstock, Hondo, Pearsall and Nueces Canyon Independent School Districts. The school districts involved will be fully connected to the information superhighway. Some 11,473 students from the six school districts will be able to have access to 21st century instruction via distance learning and will bridge the learning gap in the state and national standardized tests.

Fort Hancock Independent School District

Award: \$ 287,161 Grant

Location: Fort Hancock, Texas

Area(s) Served: County of Hudspeth



Contact Person: Billy L. Franklin
Telephone Number: 915-769-3811
Fax Number: 915-769-3467

Fort Hancock Independent School District (ISD) has formed a consortium with Dell City ISD to establish a classroom to classroom videoconferencing network. Fort Hancock has no public transportation and they are geographically isolated. They have used every possible source of funds to purchase two used videoconferencing stations and to connect with El Paso Community College. They are also in the process of constructing a technology center. RUS funding will be used to expand and improve the existing infrastructure so that all of the schools (K-12) and the community will benefit from the increased access to educational resources. Teachers will have access to current teaching information and they will have access to other professionals in their field of study to share ideas and provide support. Community residents will have access to up to date farming technology and strategies and continuing education opportunities. The students will be able to interact with students in other districts through videoconferencing classes, electronic field trips and sharing/critiquing of each others work.

This expanded and improved network has many outcomes: students will be ready to enter the workforce or receive continuing education; teachers will be better prepared to offer the students interesting/educational learning opportunities; community members can receive continuing education without the traveling expense; and the agriculture based economy may improve through gaining knowledge of current agricultural information.

Panola College

Award: \$300,000 Grant
Location: Carthage, Texas
Area(s) Served: Cities and Counties of Panola County, Marion, Shelby, Rusk and Harrison
Contact Person: Barbara Buchanan
Telephone Number: 903-693-2014
Fax Number: 903-693-5588

Panola college seeks to create a distance learning videoconferencing network that will provide students access to academic and vocational educational programs. Panola will leverage RUS funds to create the infrastructure spine needed to link their three campuses and to provide internet access to Laneville and Karnack Independent School Districts. This Eastern Texas area is limited in economic development; therefore, not providing students with a reason to gain workforce knowledge. Many are second, third and some even fourth generation welfare families. Panola College wants to offer high school students the opportunity to enroll in concurrent classes. Their vision for this project is for high



school seniors to graduate with a general education diploma, industry recognized certifications, college credits and an employment contract or continued college enrollment.

The above is Phase I of this project. Panola College, over a 3-year period, plans to have 22 independent school districts connected to their hub. Also, many state agencies including the Texas Work Force Commission, Department of Health and Human Services and the Texas Parks and Wildlife will be utilizing the network to provide increased out-reach service.

Chaparral Health Clinic Corp.

Award: \$294,400 Grant

Location: Benavides, Texas

Area(s) Served: Cities and Counties of Duval, Gonzales and LaSalle Champion

Community: Benavides in Duval County

Contact Person: F. H. Canales, Jr.

Telephone Number: 512-256-3322

Fax Number: 512-256-3324

The Chaparral Health Clinic Corp., in partnership with Gonzales Community Health Center at Nixon-Smiley and the South Texas Rural Health Services of Cotulla, will use RUS funding to purchase the necessary equipment to create an interactive videoconferencing network between themselves and the already existing network at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. This connection will provide three communities of low income residents, federally designated as Health Professional Shortage and Medically Underserved Areas, with desperately need specialty medical consultations. This connection will also provide the three clinics with the ability to decrease medical personnel isolation and increase their employment retention by providing access to peer/expert support and continuing medical education.

The implementation of this project will provide the rural residents access to expertise medical care without the traveling expense and lost time from work. The three participating clinics are part of the Texas Association of Community Health Centers (TACHC) comprised of 35 clinics. The project partners future plans are to offer membership in the network to each TACHC member.

1996 Grant Awards:

(1) Midland College

\$336,124

Midland, Texas

Contact Person: Dennis Sever

Phone Number: 915-685-4671



FAX: 915- 685-6412

RUS has awarded a grant to the Distance Learning for Rural West Texas Project which will provide distance learning opportunities to a vast underserved rural area. RUS grant funds will be used to purchase equipment for interactive video distance learning facilities that would extend Midland College credit classes (both academic and technical) to the Regional Technical Training Center (RTTC) in Fort Stockton, Texas, in Pecos County, and the Crockett County Consolidated School District (CCCSD). The expected benefits of this project are to improve educational opportunities for at least 150 people the first year and 500 people by the fifth year. These projections would include 75% additional students attending higher education studies. Specifically it will provide 1) Internet access; 2) diverse college level credit course offerings; 3) concurrent enrollment; 4) professional teacher education and staff development for junior/senior/graduate courses; and 5) non-college level credit courses, i.e., GED, ESL, and college preparatory or remediation courses in subjects such as math, reading and writing.

(2) Southwest Texas Junior College

\$335,786

Location: Uvalde, Texas

Contact Person: Blaine Bennett

Phone Number: 210-591-7275

FAX: 210-278-1054

The capacity for small, rural school districts to address the broad range of needs and skills necessary to equip students with the skills necessary to compete in the 21st Century is profoundly limited. However, key educational stake-holders in eleven counties in southwest Texas, served by Southwest Texas Junior College, have gathered together to form the Southwest Texas Network Consortium (SWTNet). Led by the President of the college, the consortium is a collaborative effort dedicated to systemic reform aimed at improving academic achievement among all young people in the rural southwest Texas area, K-16. SWTNet has proposed a Televilla project to address the educational needs of the area's rural students. Televilla is a virtual community of people, schools, firms, government agencies, libraries, health-care providers and others connected through a common vision or need and linked through telecommunications, information resources and shared services. RUS has awarded a grant for the Televilla project which will be used to develop infrastructure backbone for Internet access and distance learning. The project will link rural schools within regions to share limited resources, access to information via the Internet, and develop an "interactive teleconferencing" network.



1995 Grant Award:

Sam Houston State University

\$340,000
Huntsville

The Alabama Coushatta Indian Tribe Reservation, in Livingston County, 45 miles outside of Houston, Texas, has seen a steady decrease in members living on the reservation due to the out-migration of its people to metropolitan areas for increased employment and educational opportunities. The 300 member tribe understands that if the current migration trend continues, it will have an adverse effect upon the reservation's ability to maintain its race and culture.

Sam Houston State University (SHSU), located in Huntsville, TX., with the help of \$350,000 in Rural Utilities Services (RUS) funds, has created a network called RESNET to bridge the information and communication gaps among residents of Livingston, Pope, and Tyler Counties, in the southeast region of Texas. SHSU, a 1995 RUS Distance Learning and Medical Link Grant Program award recipient, proposed a system that will provide both distance learning and medical link applications.

The fiber optic network will link the reservation's medical clinic with the University of Texas Medical Branch in Polk County and the Tyler County Hospital. RESNET will allow two-way visual consultations between physicians to bring more specialized medical care to patients in the communities of Polk, Livingston, and Tyler counties. The use of interactive telemedicine services will improve the quality of health care services available to the tribal community.

RESNET will also allow interactive access between 4500 students in 3 rural school districts, the Native American Reservation's Head Start Program, and SHSU. The educational services will include, special education development, personnel and resource sharing, access to the Internet, and continuing faculty development. The 85-mile RESNET project will not only create 75 new jobs within the reservation, increasing medical, educational, and employment opportunities, but will benefit this entire region of 45,000 residents allowing them access to resources previously not offered to these communities.

1994 Grant Award:

(1) Dell City Independent School District (ISD)

\$171,500
Hudspeth County

Dell City Independent School District (ISD), with a population of 569, is located at the base of the Guadalupe Mountains, 90 miles east of El Paso, Texas. Like



many small, rural school districts, Dell City ISD has consistently faced the challenge of preparing its students to meet the rigorous demands of a highly competitive and global society. The demands of the 21st century require schools to provide increasingly more diverse and challenging programs for students. Technologies have redefined learning and instructional processes. The size and remoteness became a barrier for the school district compounded with decreasing school funds. The ability to access increasing technology and an abundance of resources have given students and educators in urban areas an advantage over students and educators in rural areas where resources are limited and the latest technologies are not readily available. Dell City ISD wanted to keep its students and educators competitive.

A partnership between the Dell Telephone Cooperative and Dell City ISD paved the way for a \$171,500 RUS Distance Learning and Telemedicine grant award. RUS funds provided state-of-the-art, full motion, two-way interactive video, audio, and data distance learning network which connects Dell City ISD, Fabens ISD, Region XIX Education Service Center, and the University of Texas at El Paso serving nearly 10,000 students and educators. The project, utilizing telecommunications-related technologies made possible by high speed fiber optics, will overcome geographic barriers and increase access and equity. Implementation of the project has provided many advantages, both to the schools and to the communities. Resources that were previously 90 miles away in El Paso are now literally at one's fingertips with the push of keyboards of a computer keeping students competitive with urban students. Community members have accessed adult and community education courses allowing residents to obtain educational skills that were once only offered in major cities. The business community has utilized the site for conducting employee training sessions. The local clinic can connect with the staff and resources of Texas Tech's medical facilities in El Paso.

The RUS funded distance learning network has enhanced the quality of life and served as a catalyst for economic growth and revitalization. The modern, high-quality telecommunications system has been a fundamental element to ensuring Dell City ISD's quality education and the region's economic development. Individuals and families who once thought that Dell City's location and size may exclude them from adequate education, healthcare, and economic opportunities can rest assured that they will be connected with all of the technologies available in the 21st century.

(2) North Texas Educational Network Corporation

\$156,094

Name of Project: North Texas Education Network "All-Rural" Distance Learning Cooke and Montague Counties

In 1988, students in Cooke and Montague counties scored near the top of the scale on a statewide educational test. By 1992 their scores had dropped



precipitously to nearly the statewide average. The superintendents of the four school districts in these two counties wanted desperately to get their students back on top. In 1992, the superintendents of Sacred Heart School, Muenster Independent School District, Forestburg ISD, and Era ISD joined with the Muenster Telephone Corporation and North Central Texas College to form the North Texas Educational Network Corporation (NTEN) to identify solutions that would improve the quality of education in their communities. These small, rural school systems found that they share a similar problem of being unable to deliver the kind of curriculum that will adequately prepare their students for the future. NTEN believed that the answer was to combine the resources of the schools by utilizing distance learning technology.

In 1994, NTEN received a \$156 thousand RUS Distance Learning grant for the purchase of state-of-the-art telecommunications equipment. Distance learning technology has provided Cook and Montague students the ability to enroll in a broader range of remedial, advanced and special courses, along with foreign language courses. Seniors throughout the four school districts have an opportunity to take course work for dual credit from North Central Texas College (NCTC). This gives students the opportunity to earn college credits as well as take advantage of new avenues of learning. The network also provides teachers, administrators and local residents continuing education courses. Interactive video technology has reduced travel costs as well as time away from job responsibilities and community affairs. Small business owners and entrepreneurs, for example, no longer have to travel over an hour to the nearest Texas state university for courses that the NCTC Small Business Development Center now offers, via telecommunications in their local area.

RUS funding assistance to NTEN has given the Sacred Heart School, Muenster ISD, Forestburg ISD, and Era ISD the opportunity to raise their level of educational excellence and provided the consortium with its first success story. In August 1995, Muenster ISD was named one of only 14 of 1,048 school districts in the state of Texas to receive an accreditation rating of Exemplary.

1993 Grant Award:

Star School Independent District - INFO-NET Consortium

McCulloch, Mills and San Saba Counties

Eight school districts in central Texas, 100 miles northwest of Austin, were in trouble. Shrinking budgets and increasing expenses were making it more and more difficult to keep them in operation. Central Texas Telephone Cooperative General Manager, Delbert Wilson, conducted a study which found that the school district was the largest employer in the telco's service area and an important part of the economic well being of the community. If the closings took place, there would be far reaching consequences for the community. The telco was



determined not to let that happen. In 1993, Central Texas applied for and was awarded a \$481,568 RUS Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant.

Grant funds were used to purchase state-of-the-art telecommunication technologies, including computers and fax machines for nearly all of the schools in the eight independent school districts comprising the INFO-NET consortium. The INFO-NET system offers courses that would otherwise not have been available at most of these rural facilities without RUS assistance. Many of these kids will graduate high school with 20 or 30 college credits, says Wilson. In addition to students and educators, residents of rural McCulloch, Mills, and San Saba counties have benefited from the INFO-NET project. Currently, Central Texas College is using INFO-NET to offer evening classes to area youth and adults. If not for INFO-NET, some adults in the community would have to drive two hours to the nearest college. Now they can go to the nearest high school.

A total of 477 educators and school personnel employed in these eight school districts will take advantage of development and college courses offered via the INFO-NET system. There are 10 institutions accessing the Information superhighway, and 2721 students enrolled in the participating schools. Over 600 students participate in distance learning activities and 52 students have taken college courses. In addition to distance learning classes, INFO-NET was instrumental to students in gaining access to the Internet -- which has given them access to unlimited information resources. According to Wilson, INFO-NET is just what the doctor ordered to re-energize the region and its schools.