



## FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

### Quarterly Performance Report

#### **Executive Summary**

**General Assistance** is undergoing a transition. We will use the required six week hiring freeze to review our current practices. This is among the many changes occurring within this important program. The downtown staff relocated to the MDR building in August. The Ysleta staff relocates to the new Mission Valley annex when that facility is complete. Staff has worked hard to ensure that they continue to serve clients on a timely basis despite these many changes.

Staff is looking at how to streamline its eligibility process. One opportunity is the creation of a new integrated database. Currently staff keeps their application and eligibility information based on office location. Because the information is not integrated, staff must look at two information sources to ensure that it is adhering to its policy of limiting assistance to one emergency event in a twelve month period.

It may also be appropriate to review its overall policies, which the Court authorized in February 1996. Some policies, such as our "available resource" criteria may need to be refreshed to reflect current practices. The policy still references the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program. The state now authorizes public assistance through its Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) program.

Staff is reporting an increased number of requests for assistance. The difficult economic climate is having an impact in El Paso, although the impact is not as pronounced as in other communities. It may be necessary to modify our priorities to ensure that we have resources to assist families and seniors throughout this fiscal year.

We are working closely with the County Auditor and his staff to ensure that any policy or procedural change is prudent. We want to manage our resources so that we can serve families that find themselves in a crisis.

#### **Mission Statement**

To provide a safe and healthy quality of life that enables people to thrive and reach their potential through the efficient, effective use of County community and social service programs.

## **Highlights of Current, Recent and Future Activities**

The **Veterans Assistance Office** continues to provide claims processing services. We serve veterans, their spouses, and children for service connected medical disability compensation claims, educational assistance, death benefits, employment, widow's pension, medical coverage, and home guaranteed loans through the Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA), Texas Veterans Land Board, and numerous other state and national agencies.

Since July 1, 2008 the office has served **362 veterans, widows, and their children** resulting in about **\$435,486** staying in the county. The resources enable these families to meet their basic needs. The military has a big impact in our community. If the Department of Veteran Affairs decided to close the Veterans Affairs Health Care Center located in El Paso, Texas the impact to Thomason Hospital could be disastrous.

The office serves veterans and their dependents on a scheduled appointment or walk-in basis. In addition, the Veterans Service officer provides service to individuals residing at the Ambrosio Guillen Texas State Veterans Home. The officer also provides claims service to two individuals residing in Fabens. This is part of the commitment to serve veterans wherever they reside in the community. Our database holds the records of 1,071 individuals served by the office.

The **Veteran Assistance Office** has long hosted DVA Work-Study students who work between 20-25 hours per week. At full capacity, the office has the benefit of three work study students which equals a 1.5 FTE for the County at no cost to taxpayers.

This arrangement frees the Veterans Service Officer to work in the community and make home visits as necessary to serve veterans and their dependents. Recently, the cost of fuel took its toll on recruiting for these positions. Once attractive to students, the office has experienced difficulty filling its positions. The Veterans Service Officer struggled to fill all positions. During the previous quarter, the office had the services of one work study. The Service Office has succeeded in recruiting a second work study after working closely with the placement offices of both UTEP and the Community College.

The Veterans Service Officer worked with various community organizations to manage a successful Homeless Veterans Stand-Down from September 25-26, 2008. This event identifies homeless veterans and works to connect them with available resources. In addition to this, the Officer is working with various groups to plan the annual Veterans Day observance in San Elizario. This year's event occurs on November 8, 2008. There will be an observance at the cemetery, a parade to the Placita and special recognition for Korean War veterans.

The **Galvan Law Library** continues to experience record-breaking usage. Information

requests have more than doubled. The Library continues to receive a heavy volume of family law information requests. As Ft. Bliss expands its population, these requests will continue to grow.

To manage this demand, the Library continues to promote the state sponsored legal web sites. The Library is also working to create reference points outside the Law Library. This increases capacity and relieves some demand at the Courthouse. The Library staff work cooperatively with other legal service providers to improve *pro se* legal access to those seeking to represent themselves in the judicial system.

The staff implemented the Courthouse Information Center. The Center is located on the first floor of the Courthouse. The Library staffs the center to provide direction and guidance to individuals who enter the Courthouse. These individuals have a task to perform. Unfortunately they do not have a clear understanding of how to define their need or where to start their effort. Some visit various offices before they figure out how to access the desired information.

Since opening the Center, staff has received positive feedback from various Courthouse offices. They are compiling data during the initial implementation period to help evaluate the Center's effectiveness. The Center goals are 1) to improve the public's experience with the County by efficiently directing individuals to the correct department; 2) reduce transient library traffic; 3) reduce transient Courthouse traffic; 4) establish other sources to disburse legal and public information.

The Library continues upgrading its computer network to accommodate increased usage. New demand comes because the District Clerk's Office discontinued allowing computer access for civil and criminal case searches in their office. The increase in the number of Law Library subscriptions has also increased demand. The Law Library recognizes the need to meet user expectations regarding research and document creation and document sharing. Its computer network is central to that demand.

The **Child Welfare Board** elected its new officers. The new chairman is Rene Acosta. Ms. Acosta assumes the duties from Mr. Raul Armendariz. The state recognized Mr. Armendariz for his exemplary efforts on behalf of children at a recent joint Child Welfare Board and Partnerships for Children statewide conference in Austin.

The Board reviews and authorizes expenditures on behalf of children receiving protective services. These expenditures provide clothing, medical care and address critical needs for these children. The Board gives priority to the needs of children under the care of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS).

The Child Welfare Board recently struggled with the issue of paying for applications for permanent immigration status for children in DFPS custody. The Department of Homeland Security dramatically increased application fees. Payment of these fees and

the fees for medical examinations can quickly exhaust the Board's resources. With the guidance of the County Attorney's office, the Board has determined that it will continue to serve as the payer of last resort. The Board requested that the attorney appointed to manage these applications request a waiver of fees. If Homeland Security does not grant a waiver, the Board will ask DFPS to pay the fees. If DFPS is unable to pay the fees, the Board will consider payment within its resources.

The Board is receiving numerous requests for funds early in the fiscal year. At its most recent meeting, the Board authorized spending for the upcoming holiday season. It prudently held back on some requests to encourage DFPS to solicit contributions from the community.

If DFPS does not receive contributions, the Board will consider additional requests. The Board acknowledged that spending its resources now may limit its ability to fund quincinera or graduation observances. Such are the difficult decisions that the Board makes each month on the County's behalf.

The Board's not for profit fund development arm, the **Child Welfare League** sponsors its third annual "Stars for Kids". This year's event is on November 8, 2008 at the El Paso Museum of Art from 6:00 to 9:00 PM. The event honors the late Judge Edward S. Marquez. All proceeds provide additional funding for needs that the County can not meet. The League is an important source for non-traditional and emergency needs that cannot wait until the Board meets. Several members of the Court graciously provided stars for the auction.

**Rural Transit** launched its **Vámonos Vanpool** program in March. Rural Transit has a \$1 million dollar award from federal Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (MCAQ) funds over a three year period to support this project.

Vámonos Vanpool allows employees or job trainees in El Paso County to join vanpools for transportation to their employment or job training site. The vanpool saves employees money and reduces the number of vehicles on the road. The project launched just as gasoline prices started rising.

The County now has **nine (9) vanpools in service**. The County's vendor, **Vanpool Services Incorporated (VPSI)**, manages the program. It is working to educate the public about this resource and encourage the formation of more vanpools.

### **Budget Analysis/Financial Status**

Program staff is grateful to the Court for this year's cost of living increase. Staff appreciates this investment in the workforce. The recent Court focus on vehicles provides a good opportunity for a review of the department's fleet. The Nutrition and Transit programs both have heavily utilized vehicles. Staff welcomes an opportunity to

review maintenance and repair of these vehicles on a scheduled basis.

### **Grant Status**

The **City-County Nutrition Program** submitted a proposal to the Texas Department of Agriculture for funds for its home delivered meal program. The new program, **Texans Feeding Texans**, is an expansion of a pilot program.

The Texas Department of Agriculture launched this program in 2007 to address the funding gap for meals not covered by federal funds. The program requires the County to contribute local funds to a home delivered meal program. The County already makes an important contribution to senior meal services. This qualifies the County to participate in this program.

In addition, the County must have served homebound elderly and/or disabled individuals in the County between September 1, 2007 and August 31, 2008 regardless of funding source. The County provided 289,084 meals during its last fiscal year. Staff prepared and submitted the application package prior to the November 1, 2008 deadline.

### **Contract Status**

The Court ratified awards to 22 groups and organizations from its **hotel occupancy tax** (HOT) revenue for a total of \$886,413 in funding. This year the Court adopted a tiered approach to its allocations.

The County funded its assets in the top tier. This relieves the County of the necessity of using general revenue to fund the operation of the County Historical Society, Concordia Cemetery and its historic facilities such as the San Elizario Jail and Los Portales Museum.

In addition, the County awarded funds to Amigo Airsho, the Texas vs. the Nation football game and the City of El Paso's Museum of Art among others. This tier of awards is to groups and organizations with a proven track record of successful events. They have effectively used their funds to promote their events to an audience outside of El Paso County in keeping with the Court's goal of "putting heads in beds".

The third tier of awards went to organizations new to the County. These organizations, such as Pro Musica, have an excellent reputation but have not received County HOT funds in previous years. These awards were small to enable these groups to demonstrate their capacity to use the funds effectively.

Staff worked on the County's first **economic incentive grant submittal package**. The County partnered with the City to provide an incentive to the Horizon Group Properties, the developer of The Outlet Shoppes at El Paso. This project is a "Section 3 c of

**Chapter 381 Economic Development Program**". County staff worked with Mr. Javier Gadney of the City's Economic Development Department to pay the grant request.

This offered staff an opportunity to work out a process for any future Chapter 381 grants. The City and County are working together on other economic incentive programs. The City prepared a flyer to distribute in the County that provides information on our Revolving Loan Fund as well as other economic incentive programs. This partnership ensures a coordinated effort for future activities.

### **Performance Summary**

All programs have set their performance targets for this fiscal year. Staff reviews these targets on a quarterly basis to ensure they are on target.

### **Training Status**

The **Veterans Service Officer** attended the annual fall training required to maintain his certification through the Texas Veterans Commission. The TVC requires service officers to attend 12 credit hours of certification training annually. This training refreshes information on new initiatives and any changes in VA programs.

### **Board, Advisory Board or Commission Status**

The **Galvan Law Library committee of the El Paso County Bar Association** resumed its meetings in September following the appointment of members by the Bar president. Pursuant to the Texas Local Government Code Sec. 323.024 and established by Commissioner Court order, a committee selected by the County Bar Association oversees management of the Law Library. Actions of the committee are subject to approval by Commissioners Court.

The committee will continue its review of publications to ensure a healthy collection that meets the needs of its lay and legal patrons. The committee also tracks the Library's financial status. As a self-funding operation, the committee is committed to ensuring the Library has the resources necessary to operate.

The **Joint City/County Revolving Loan Fund Committee** meets on an as needed basis. Committee member Marisa Marquez tendered her resignation. Ms. Marquez is a newly elected legislative member representing the 77<sup>th</sup> Legislative District. The Court will appoint a member to replace Ms. Marquez.

The **Child Welfare Board** advises the Court on expenditures for children at risk of abuse or neglect, especially those in the state's protective care. The Child Welfare

Board meets every fourth Tuesday of the month at St. Paul's Lutheran Church at 1000 Montana Ave.

## PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE



County of El Paso  
 VETERANS ASSISTANCE OFFICE  
 4641 Cohen Avenue  
 Suite D  
 El Paso, Texas 79924  
 Michael Flores, Manager, County Service Officer

Department of Family and Community Services

Number of Veterans Served				
	July 2008	August 2008	September 2008	Totals
Precinct 1	24	32	31	87
Precinct 2	23	29	33	85
Precinct 3	34	29	35	98
Precinct 4	25	29	30	84
Homeless	2	2	1	5
Outside El Paso County	0	1	1	2
Other	0	1	0	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>362</b>



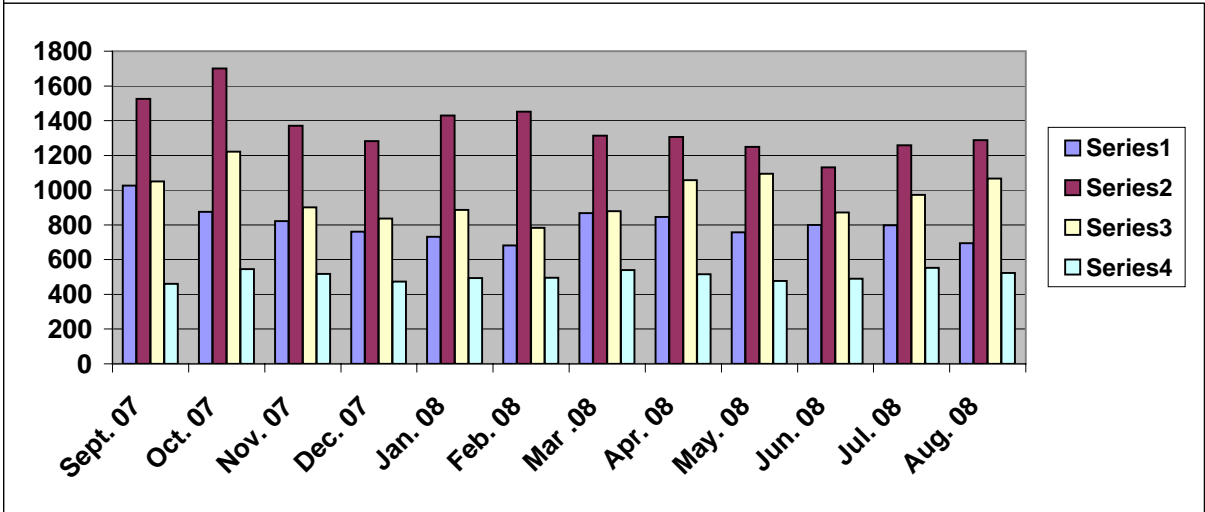
Veterans Assistance Office				
WORK STUDY/INTERNS/VOLUNTEER HOURS				
	July 2008	August 2008	September 2008	Totals
DVA WORK STUDY Adam Milliren	89.5	30.5	79	199
DVA WORK STUDY Ivan Coronel Phillip Trevizo	0	0	0	0
DVA WORK STUDY Dennis Marquez	0	0	0	0
VOLUNTEERS	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	89.5	30.5	79	199
<b>\$\$ SAVED COUNTY</b> (based on \$7.55/hr pay rate)	<b>\$675.73</b>	<b>\$230.28</b>	<b>\$596.45</b>	<b>\$1,502.44</b>

TVC/DVA EL PASO COUNTY EXPENDITURES TO VETERANS

	FY 2006	FY 2007
Estimated Veteran Population	46,499	48,306
Compensation & Pension Claims	\$173,345,000	\$176,034,000
Readjustment & Vocational Rehabilitation	\$17,963,000	\$20,361,000
Insurance & Indemnities	0	\$3,068,000
Construction & Related Costs	\$0	\$5,536,000
General Operating Expenses	\$1,000,000	\$1,955,000
Medical Services & Administrative	\$68,419,000	\$69,693,000
TOTAL Expenditures	\$260,727,000	\$274,692,000



## EL PASO COUNTY RURAL TRANSIT ANNUAL RIDERSHIP REPORT



Sept. 07	1027	1525	1051	461
Oct. 07	876	1701	1221	545
Nov. 07	822	1371	901	518
Dec. 07	761	1282	837	473
Jan. 08	731	1430	886	494
Feb. 08	682	1451	783	496
Mar .08	867	1313	878	539
Apr. 08	845	1307	1057	516
May. 08	758	1249	1094	478
Jun. 08	800	1131	872	490
Jul. 08	797	1259	972	552
Aug. 08	695	1287	1066	523

#10-Anthony/Canutillo  
 #20-Montana Vista  
 #30-Horizon City  
 #40-Fabens/Tornillo