

GO TEXAN!

"The GO TEXAN Rural Community Program creates a single rallying call for rural Texas"

By Theresa Everline, Editor
Texas Department of Agriculture

Rural Texas is growing a whole 'nother kind of crop—jobs, tourism, and business investments. The Texas Department of Agriculture's (TDA) GO TEXAN Rural Community Program supports and encourages this growth by providing access to expertise, resources, marketing, and networking opportunities.

"At TDA, we're helping Texans and Texas communities accomplish real economic results while they maintain the character and culture that makes rural Texas unique," Texas Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples said. "Communities across Texas are rolling out their welcome mats for economic opportunity through this GO TEXAN program."



The GO TEXAN Rural Community Program creates a single rallying call for rural Texas, educating the public about all rural Texas has to offer and encouraging rural communities to share and promote successful ideas. Through the program, rural communities have the inside track on opportunities available to transform small towns across Texas into hot commodities for the future.


The Rural Community Program began in a slightly different form in October 2003 under the name Texas Yes!, an initiative launched by TDA to promote the growth and prosperity of rural Texas. Given that the Lone Star State's rural areas are a vital part of Texas history, this program was designed to help rural communities capitalize on the unique culture and distinctive flavor they have to offer.

Recognizing rural Texas' potential to boost the state's overall economy, Governor Rick Perry announced in September 2003 the allocation of \$1 million to TDA to support Texas Yes! Membership in Texas Yes! was free and open to rural communities, rural businesses, and other organizations devoted to the success of rural Texas. By 2008, Texas Yes! had grown to include more than 1,300 members.

During this time, TDA's GO TEXAN marketing program was expanding, with its distinctive mark—a glowing brand in the shape of Texas—becoming more and more recognized. Initially designed to promote Texas agricultural products like food, fiber, produce, horticulture, and wine, it eventually encompassed non-agricultural products, such as gift items and home furnishings.

Seizing the opportunity to further expand the GO TEXAN brand, Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples launched the GO TEXAN Restaurant Program, which links

SAMCO
LEAK DETECTION
Office/Fax: (512) 263-7043
Mobile: (512) 751-5325
sgodfrey@samco-leakservice.com
www.samco-leakservice.com
**Acoustic Water System
Leak Detection**
Complete & partial water system leak surveys
Annual leak detection preventative maintenance programs
Leak detection program consulting
GPS/GIS leak mapping programs
Meter Testing & Water Audits



Sam Godfrey, Owner
1308 Daytona Drive, Austin, Texas, 78733

Texas restaurants with local producers to bring the quality of Texas to the table. In May 2008, TDA created a new GO TEXAN program to replace Texas Yes!—the GO TEXAN Rural Community Program. Designed like Texas Yes!, the new program offers similar benefits but provides the added value of being associated with the highly recognized GO TEXAN brand. TDA believes this change will bring even more recognition to the Rural Community Program and ultimately rural communities across Texas.

Anyone who supports rural Texas can be a member of the GO TEXAN Rural Community Program. There are two membership categories: certified and associate.

Certified membership is open to non-metropolitan counties or cities with a population of less than 20,000. City limits may not adjoin another city or group of cities' city-limit boundaries with an aggregate population of 50,000 or more. (A map of metropolitan counties can be found at www.gotexan.org under "Rural Communities.")

Associate membership is available to supporters of rural Texas—such as chambers of commerce, economic development corporations, councils of government, convention and visitors bureaus, sole proprietors, partnerships, cooperative organizations, and corporations—whose principal place of business is in Texas and who have a business location in rural Texas. Individuals, organizations, and associations committed to supporting and promoting rural Texas are also eligible for associate membership.

In order to boost local economies and attract new jobs and dollars, the GO TEXAN Rural Community Program has two ways for members to leverage the dollars available to promote local tourism events. These popular programs are Hometown STARS and Bootstrap Bucks.

The Hometown STARS (Supporting Tourism and Rural Success) matching fund program reimburses GO TEXAN Rural Community Program certified members for half of their approved promotional costs up to \$10,000. This program is for communities with experience managing their tourism programs and a budget that accommodates the matching dollars required.

The Bootstrap Bucks Program is designed to help promote tourism events and festivals supported by GO TEXAN Rural Community Program certified members. Selected certified members receive up to \$2,500 for promotion items such as banners, posters, newspaper advertisements, and radio/television spots. This program helps rural communities starting their tourism programs or communities adding new elements to their programs. Bootstrap Bucks is not a matching funds program.

These programs have had a clear impact. For example, the community of Eden took advantage of Hometown STARS to make a bigger splash with its Fall Fest. Using radio, television, and newspaper ads purchased with \$7,800

of matching funds, the program "single-handedly jump-started a small community," said Genora Young, Eden's community development director. "Without STARS funding, we would not have expanded the Fall Fest to three days, doubled attendance, or tripled the retail sales tax projections."

In addition to financial assistance, the GO TEXAN Rural Community Program offers another important way to help empower rural communities. The program works in partnership with the Texas Travel Industry Association to conduct rural tourism workshops across the state. Workshop topics cover a wide array of issues designed to provide rural communities with the tools and knowledge needed to take their tourism efforts to the next level. Workshop speakers include nationally recognized experts and homegrown heroes. Information on dates, locations, agendas, and speakers can be found at www.gotexan.org under "Rural Communities."

A newsletter and e-mail updates sent to all GO TEXAN Rural Community Program members alert them to application deadlines and workshop opportunities and offer tips and other resources. The yield of all these efforts? A bumper crop of economic development success for rural Texas' future. ★



mman | architects

Your city is your world. Our world is your city.

mman | architects. designs with you in mind.
309 West Main Street, Suite 120, Round Rock, Texas, 78664 • 512-733-1150