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News Release

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USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT AWARDS $500,000 FOR THE DISTANCE LEARNING AND TELEMEDICINE PROGRAM

Temple, Texas, September 30, 2003–Bryan Daniel, State Director, for Texas USDA Rural Development today announced the selection of Coastal Bend College as a recipient of the Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Grant program.

The DLT funds will be used to assist Coastal Bend College in better serving the needs of its diverse, economically disadvantaged, rural population residing in a twelve county area. Most students from this large service area have only limited exposure to technology. Coastal Bend College will expand its distance learning program by equipping state of the art business technology classrooms on its campus locations in Alice, Beeville, Kingsville, and Pleasanton and the campuses of its high school partners Orange Grove ISD, Pettus ISD, Premont ISD, and Skidmore-Tynan ISD.

"Everyone who has played a role in extending telecommunications service to rural Texans should be very proud of what has been accomplished," said Bryan Daniel, State Director. "The communication lines you help build and maintain are truly the life lines of the nation's rural heartland."

In total, 57 distance education grants for $23.5 million, and 27 telemedicine grants for more than $8.9 million were selected for funding. The education projects will help 556 schools provide students with educational tools to better equip them for the global digital economy. Additionally, rural residents will have access to better, faster, and more modern health care through 190 medical service facilities. A complete list of the selected grant recipients can be found at the USDA Rural Development web site at: http://www.rurdev.usda.gov.

USDA's Rural Utilities Service administers the Distance Learning and Telemedicine program. USDA Rural Development serves as the lead federal entity for rural development needs, and administers program assistance through three agencies: Rural Housing Service, Rural Business-Cooperative Service, and Rural Utilities Service.

Further information on USDA Rural Development can be obtained by visiting USDA's web site at http://www.rurdev.usda.gov.

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The USDA Rural Development mission area was created in 1994 and includes the Rural Business-Cooperative Service, the Rural Housing Service, and the Rural Utilities Service. Its mission is to use the resources of USDA to provide an improved quality of life for the nation's 53 million rural people.