



# NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Rural Development  
101 South Main • Suite 102 • Temple, TX 76501

Phone: (254) 742-9700 • Fax: (254) 742-9709 • TDD: (254) 742-9712 • Web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/tx>

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Contact Name: Scooter Brockette

Telephone Number: 254-742-9700

Email: [Scooter.Brockette@tx.usda.gov](mailto:Scooter.Brockette@tx.usda.gov)

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## USDA AWARDS \$24.6 MILLION IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS FOR EDUCATION AND MEDICAL SERVICE

**TEMPLE, Texas, October 8, 2004** – Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman today announced the selection of Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) grants totaling more than \$24.6 million, providing greater educational opportunities and medical service to rural residents in 45 states and two U.S. territories. In Texas, USDA Rural Development is awarding three grants totaling \$1,392,111 to: Frank Phillips College, Borger, Texas, Educational Service Center Region XV, San Angelo, Texas, and CHRISTUS St. Michael Health System, Texarkana, Texas.

“The Bush Administration is committed to supporting rural communities by investing in technology,” said Veneman. “These grants will help expand the availability of state of the art medical and educational resources to rural families.”

“Information technology is critical to rural Americans. It significantly improves the quality of their health care and their ability to gain access to educational programs that better prepare them to compete in a global marketplace,” said Agriculture Under Secretary for Rural Development Gilbert Gonzalez.

“Rural Texans will benefit from the opportunities provided by the distance learning and telemedicine programs. The funding of these three projects in Texas will give the rural residents access to modern telecommunications technology, and enhance their local medical care,” said Bryan Daniel, Texas State Director. “These programs are among many that USDA Rural Development can utilize in our ongoing commitment to the future of rural communities.”

In total, 40 distance education grants for \$17.1 million, and 22 telemedicine grants for more than \$7.5 million were selected for funding. The education projects will help 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 medical service facilities.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. USDA Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting the web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/>.

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