



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **USDA LAUNCHES RURAL EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOP PILOT TO HELP FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS OBTAIN FINANCING**

TEMPLE, TEXAS, April 19, 2004 – Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman today unveiled a new USDA faith-based and community organization pilot program to help educate nonprofit organizations on the Rural Development Community Facilities Guaranteed Loan Program and connect them to local lending institutions.

“To further support our nation’s rural communities, these workshops will help faith-based and community organizations get the information they need about available resources,” said Veneman. “This Administration remains committed to helping faith-based and community organizations get access to federal resources to enhance their capacity to serve their communities.”

“Access to USDA Rural Development programs by faith based and community organizations offers opportunities for even more rural Texans to benefit from our many valuable programs, such as the Community Facilities Guaranteed Loan Program,” said Bryan Daniel, State Director for USDA Rural Development in Texas. “To help inform the organizations about our programs available for rural Texas, we will be holding workshops throughout the state this year.”

Through an Executive Order on December 12, 2002, President Bush incorporated USDA into his Faith-Based and Community Initiative. As part of its faith-based and community focus, USDA ensures that faith-based and community organizations have equal access to USDA programs and benefits and works in conjunction with the Department's many mission areas to reach out and educate faith-based and community organizations about USDA programs and benefits. The best opportunities for federal assistance to faith-based and community organizations are outlined on USDA’s faith-based and community initiatives Web site at <http://www.usda.gov/fbci>.

USDA Rural Development’s community facility loan guarantee program allows lenders to finance and facilitate essential community facilities such as health care clinics, police and fire stations, schools and child care centers. Through this program, USDA can provide a lender a guarantee of up to 90% of the total loan amount. In fiscal year 2003, the average loan guarantee was \$1.6 million with a range from \$55,000 to \$22.5 million.

Information about the dates and locations of the educational workshops will be announced soon and will be made available through USDA Rural Development field offices. Local contact information is available on USDA’s Rural Development Web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov> under USDA Rural Development--State and Field Office Locations.