



Rural Communities Becoming All They Can Be:
How they're doing it and where YOU fit in!

TSTCI FUTURES RETREAT – LAKE TAHOE

August 7-8, 2013

TX Rural Innovators



Texas Rural Innovators is a volunteer network of rural advocates created to promote high-quality learning opportunities for leaders of Texas small cities, towns and rural regions. We conduct education forums that bring the nation's most successful practitioners and practical thinkers face-to-face with rural leaders. We promote discussion of important rural issues, and we bring rural leaders together to learn from and inspire one another.

Headline: Colquitt, GA



*“Georgia Town of 2,000 Renewed
By Telling Stories”*

The Story



Seeking ways to revitalize their economically depressed town, community leaders hire NYU fine arts graduate to develop a play called Swamp Gravy based on real, local stories and acted by local citizens.

Bottom Line



- Theater and storytelling museum - Cotton Hall
- Budget has gone from \$2,000 in 1989 to over \$2.5M in 2007-2008
- Employs over 60 people
- Five historic buildings have been renovated
- Assets increased from \$0 to \$4.5 M
- After-school and summer arts enrichment

More Bottom Line



- Market on the Square – 20+ antiques vendors and small business incubator
- 18-room B&B with restaurant on National Register of Historic Places
- Performed at Kennedy Center in Washington

1000 Words ... before



1000 Words ... after



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1000 Words ... before



1000 Words ... after



Headline: Western NC



“Mountain communities capitalize on ‘hidden industry’ for a unique tourist attraction that fuels regional renewal”

The Story



Artist and artisan studios become tourist destination trails and rural communities are revitalized in the process of making themselves ready to accept visitors.





Bottom Line



- Restored 144 building facades
- 178 Business expansions or building add-ons
- More than 1316 new jobs
- Net gain of 203 businesses
- Over \$36 million public / private investment
- Largest town served: 1700

Headline: Whitesburg KY



“Media/arts co-op celebrates four decades in coal-mining town ‘telling our own story in our own words’”

The Story



An arts and media center created by LBJ's War on Poverty allows people in a small, coal-mining town in Appalachia to tell their own stories in film, theater, song and other art forms.

Bottom line



- Created more than 100 original films
- Recording studio
- 100s of original music recordings
- 150-seat theater
- Traveling theater company
- 24-hour community radio station
- AMI – Youth media training institute
- 30 employees - \$1 million payroll

1000 Words



1000 Words



1000 Words



Headline: Edcouch-Elsa



“Disadvantaged kids excel in Ivy Leagues thanks to student-run program on the Texas-Mexico border”

The Story



In one of Texas' poorest school districts, a non-profit organization operated out of a room in the local high school prepares and sends record numbers of students to top-flight universities ... and many come back to give back.

Bottom Line



- In 10 years, 60+ graduates from Ivy Leagues
- Regional 'mercado' under construction
- New leadership for community
- College Prep
- Study abroad partnerships
- Digital storytelling

Headline: Nebraska



“Statewide effort shows rural communities how to revitalize through local foundations with funds from local sources”

The Story



In 1992 a new Governor / Lt. Governor create a non-profit to foster development of locally controlled and locally financed community foundations; 200 foundations created and over \$125 million raised, mostly from local sources.

Bottom Line



Community Endowments

• Community/Fdtn	Pop.	Endowment (millions of \$)
• Valley County	4,647	\$ 4.8
• McCook	7,994	\$ 3.1
• Basset/Rock Cty.	1,756	\$ 2.5
• Shickley	376	\$ 1.7

Headline: New Mexico



“In tiny Harding County, pop. 695, students turn a school project into a newspaper and associated businesses ... then paint the town”

The Story



Students go from gathering family histories to creating a countywide newspaper, develop local businesses and win national attention. And they finish by repainting the town.

Bottom Line



- Students write and print histories honoring local families, create DVD's for sale, and produce a play
- Write and publish a countywide newspaper
- Student business offers DVD/CD production, copying & photo printing, photo restoration, graphics, media assistance, photo pins and gifts
- In 2010 the student business gets one of 16 awards in the US for "Re-Designing the High School Experience"
- One of four NM schools selected for Microsoft PIL grant worth \$325 and personal mentoring by MS executive
- Revitalize downtown by repainting eight buildings and winning state 'Best Tourism Practices' award
- The K-12 school has 52 students (up from 36 two years ago)

Worth a 1000 words ...





**New Mexico State University Honors
Harry Hopson pg. 2**

More Harding Co. Treasures pgs. 8 - 9

Harding Co. Heroes pgs. 16

Pirates' Pride pgs. 32 - 41

Logo at the left is the New Roundup Logo
Created and Drawn by Roundup Artist - Jerome Wheeler

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HARDING COUNTY ROUNDUP

"SPREADING THE NEWS ACROSS THE HIGH PLAINS"


March 2007

Volume 1,
Issue 6
\$3.00

Discovered: A Genuine Treasure!

(No Fool's Gold in Harding County, New Mexico)

By Freelance Writer - G.H. Sherrer



of authenticity. Upon arrival in what is now New Mexico, many died from disease, starvation, brutal nature, from attacks of the residents there during that era, who also did not want to give up their lifestyle and land. These are causes worth dying for.


No newcomer need remind you that New Mexico's sons are among those going to Iraq; and while there they ensure those citizens have a right to hold elections and vote, and that some Iraqis have walked as much as a hundred miles to exercise their freedom to do so. Nor do you need to be told that freedoms which are not exercised can be bought by blood, and to vote ensures that your voice can be heard, and that you can help write history. Harding County residents know these things. However, perhaps an outsider may bring one new perspective to Harding County? The treasure this writer discovered is your history and residents - folks as fresh as a breeze blowing through the grasslands, and real as the sun rising over the mesa; people with gentle strength, with an honest way of living, a lifestyle to be honored, respected and protected for future generations.

Harding County contains much more than undergrowth, CO2 and cash land. It contains folks with integrity, self-starters, high-achievers, multi-tasking hardworking go-getters, who are derived from hardy stock of surviving pioneers, the salt of the earth. You are the treasure.

So, how can one preserve the prize of such a rich heritage? Recognize that you hold a jewel which you are responsible for; hold tightly what is good from your past, and build on the historical foundations that remain, take pride in what sets you apart from everyone else, your living heritage in the dear hearts and gentle people of Harding County.

Your recognizing the real value in Harding County, its future leaders, is evident in passing of the Bond Issue for education on February 6th; Harding County's support of its sons and daughters is reflected in their desire to improve schools, by providing school-based health centers, and by giving students real life experience with publishing by way of the *Harding County Roundup*.

And from this writer's viewpoint, the youth of Harding County should both be honored by the County's focus on their education, and be honorable in their pursuit of same; the youth should be respected by those who have gone before them, and be respectful of their heritage; should be treasured as a pledge for the future of Harding County, and be a treasure to Harding County by doing their part to restore and maintain their heritage. For respect and honor are earned.



Honorable Harding County residents and their future children will cherish the life they lead, and certainly will not trade it for any counterfeit that is offered; they will not exchange their abundant life for another, one in which they are among millions of cookie-cutter individuals, in crowded places that only glitter with fool's gold. Rather, that honorable person will celebrate their heritage, appreciate their uniqueness, guard their history, and protect a way of life for future generations. Harding County's treasure is its history, heritage, and residents, both young and young at heart. For a brief time, I was in your midst, and was blessed.

G.H. Sherrer is a freelance writer, and resident of Phoenix, Arizona

Have you ever searched for a pen only to stumble upon a fifty-dollar bill that you had stashed away? What an unexpected find, one sure to put a smile on your face!

On February 6, this Phoenix writer entered the historic Harding County Court House in Mosquero, New Mexico, hopeful of finding pieces of local history, old photos, artifacts and antique representative of the people who paved Harding County with their blood, sweat and tears.

Photos are hanging on the wall of the Court House. However, the real discovery that day was a living treasure, the people of Harding County with their heritage written in their hearts, including those dedicated persons presiding over an election: Judy Casados, Carol Hammer, Jimmie Hazen, and Francisco (Nick) Gonzales. The voting issues were for Precinct 001 School Board Members, and a Bond Issue, both for the purposes of improving education in School District No. 5.

Certainly, no one needs to remind the good people in Harding County of the importance of voting; as their ancestors wrote the book on sacrifices for freedom of choice. The land was watered by the blood of your families, who fought with their lives for their values: a life of solitude, yet neighborly; one of entrepreneurship, free enterprise; one

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Worth a 1000 words ...



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Worth a 1000 words ...



Mobilization ... Results



- GA: Downtown renovated, 60 jobs, \$4.5 mill
- NC: 200 new businesses, 1300 new jobs
- KY: 30 jobs, \$1million payroll, 40 years
- TX: 60 Ivy League grads, new leadership
- AR: Housing, Education, job training etc. etc.
- NE: 200 foundations, \$125mill raised,
million-dollar endowments
- NM: Student businesses, renewed downtown,
grants for school, national awards

Lessons learned ...



- Variety – no two alike
- NOT economic development model
- Importance of one or a few people
- Lots of partners / collaboration
- Power of finding your identity
- No such thing as too small, too poor, too uneducated, or too isolated

What Can Coops Do?



- Inform yourself about the art & science of community development
- Be a neutral facilitator: start the conversation about your community's future
- Help with community-based planning efforts
- Consider non-traditional scholarships
- Initiate exploration of family & community heritage
- Promote the development of a community foundation

Keep in Touch



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