

# Llano Grande Center for Research and Development



February 2009

[www.llanogrande.org](http://www.llanogrande.org)

## STATE FARM AWARDS \$100K TO LG

The Llano Grande Center continues to invest in the college prep aspect of its work, thanks in part to a major award from State Farm.

This February, State Farm announced that the Llano Grande Center would be awarded \$100,000 to participate in the Youth Advisory Board program, which aims to create student leadership by promoting youth participation and engagement.

“We hope to reach out to a broader range of our student body, so that more of our kids are informed about what it takes to succeed at the college of their choice and have the support systems to do so,” said Llano Grande Center Executive Director Francisco Guajardo.



Through funds from the YAB grant, the Center is planning on creating an outreach campaign that will include training a corps of 15-20 high school students as leaders to mentor other students applying to college; a quarterly mailing of information about college to all EEHS parents; and extended office hours for appointments with parents and students who need one-on-one support

with college applications or financial aid.

“These funds will allow the Llano Grande Center to partner with and support Edcouch-Elsa High School in their college advising, reaching out to all students and their families with information and guidance,”

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## LG RECEIVES GRANT FROM LOCAL FOUNDATION

Llano Grande received more good news in January in the form of a \$10,000 grant from the Texas Valley Communities

Foundation that will bolster the Center's college prep work.

The grant is being made through TVCOF's Engaging Communities for College Readiness (ENCORE) program, which has a goal to “educate communities about the importance of preparing all students for college, work and life.”

The award will allow the Center to extend hours



**ENCORE**  
Engaging Communities for College Readiness

into the evening, so that the staff and student mentors can meet with parents and students about applying and

preparing for college.

“ENCORE seeks to enhance and develop college readiness programs by providing ongoing support and resources to ensure students graduate from high school prepared for postsecondary education and the workforce,” said ENCORE Project Director Ernesto Villarreal.

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# SETTING A COURSE FOR COLLEGE

## STUDENTS AND STAFF BRAVE THE COLD OF THE MIDWEST TO VISIT SCHOOLS

In what proved to be a drastic change of pace from home, 11 students braved the snow and extreme cold of the U.S. Midwest with the Llano Grande Center to visit colleges this past month.

The travelers - Edcouch-Elsa High School students ranging in grade from freshman to senior, and one Edinburg High School senior – left balmy South Texas with Llano Grande staff for a week to visit colleges and universities in blustery Michigan and Chicago.

This year's trip focused on Midwest schools including Kalamazoo College, Michigan State University, Northwestern University, the University of Chicago, and the Art Institute of Chicago. As part of the experience, the students were able to stay in dorm rooms with host students during the trip, go to college classes, meet with professors and talk with admissions officers.

Despite some tumbles on frozen sidewalks and wind-chills that sometimes dropped the temperature below zero degrees, students said the trip was a great way to open up their perspective on what to expect when they leave home for big universities.

"I liked it because we were with college students who were responsible and mature," said Viviana Rodriguez, a senior at Edcouch-Elsa High School. Viviana is interested in studying film at a big school like MSU, she said.

"Seeing a place like that, where everyone is working hard to learn and has to be responsible for themselves really showed me that there is a lot to expect when I go to college," she added.

As part of the trip, the students also spent time sightseeing around Chicago, visiting museums and landmarks, and going shopping. A highlight of the trip was meeting famed designer Charles Harrison - designer of the modern day plastic trash can, and the Viewmaster - who gave the students a tour of the Art Institute of Chicago.

The college trip is part of the leadership development and college preparation philosophy that the Llano Grande Center was founded on. Since the first college trip in 1993, hundreds of students from Edcouch-Elsa have attended and graduated from the most prestigious universities in the country.



### THANK YOU!

*The Llano Grande Center would like to thank the following individuals and companies for their generous donations of \$1000 or more, which made this year's college trip a success:*

**ANGEL TELLO**

**WAL-MART**

**AEP ELECTRIC**

**ROBERT ELIZALDE**

**RAMOS BBQ**

*The Center would also like to thank the many others who contributed to this trip, especially **Kalamazoo College and Michigan State University** for their gracious hospitality.*



*Top - students at Kalamazoo College; Bottom - students enjoying the night lights of Chicago*

# LG CENTER WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The Llano Grande Center welcomed two new members to its Board of Directors this December at the annual Winter Board Meeting.

Joining the group are Dr. Rodolfo Rocha, a retired professor of history who, as a visiting professor, formerly taught courses at Edcouch-Elsa High School; and Edyael Casaperalta, a Llano Grande alum and currently a program and research associate with the Center for Rural Strategies.

Dr. Rocha returned to the Valley recently after retiring from the Metropolitan State College of Denver, where he served as the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs. He has been an educator for more than 40 years in the classroom, both as a high school teacher and a professor. Many of those years were spent at Edcouch-Elsa High School, teaching college-level history in the Gifted



*Rocha*



*Casaperalta*

and Talented World History class. As a retiree, he now devotes his time to consultation work and community organizing.

Casaperalta graduated from EEHS and the Llano Grande Center in 2001. After graduating from Occidental College in 2005, she returned to the Valley to work with the Center for several months before attending Ohio University, where she earned her master's degree in Latin American Studies in 2007. She currently works as a field-based researcher for CRS.

The Center's Board of Directors voted to expand the board to six members this December, creating two additional spots, as a way to diversify input. Rocha and Casaperalta join current Llano Grande Board members Miguel Guajardo, Cristina Salinas, Stella Flores and Maribel Saenz.

# LLANO GRANDE HIRES NEW STAFF MEMBERS

Two part-time recruits have joined the Llano Grande staff, stepping in to take on the duties of former Office Manager Yvette Rodriguez.

Both Llano Grande alumni, J.P. Galvan and Steven Ozuna are college students working part-time as administrative assistants to handle some of the financial and management duties of the office.

J.P. is an alum of the Llano Grande Center, who graduated from Edcouch-Elsa High School in 2006. He attended Kalamazoo College in Michigan for two years before returning home to help his family, and will now be working part-time to help manage many of logistical duties of the office, including events coordination and archiving.



*Galvan*

Steven, also a Llano Grande alum, graduated from Edcouch-Elsa High School in 2007 and is now a sophomore at the University of Texas-Pan American, where he is studying business. He will be working to help manage the Center's day-to-day operations, including bookkeeping and inventory.



*Ozuna*

**PARENTS: WANT TO PARTICIPATE? FEEL FREE TO COME BY OUR OFFICE AT ROOM A1 AT EEHS,  
EMAIL US AT INFO@LLANOGRANDE.ORG, OR CALL US.**

# REPAIRS BEING MADE ON LG HOUSE

The Llano Grande Center's headquarters on Monte Cristo Road finally received some much-needed repairs after sustaining some minor damage during Hurricane Dolly.

As part of the Center's insurance claim, Llano Grande was able to bring crews in to fix some water damage taken on by the house from the storm, which reports say dropped upwards of 16 inches of rain in the area when it hit. Seepage caused by the large amounts of water during the storm led to parts of the 80+ year-old Llano Grande House's ceiling to cave in.

High winds during the storm also tore up some trees in the yard, causing damage to sections of the property's surrounding fence, which was also repaired.

The Llano Grande House is one of the Center's two offices, and was one the first homes built in the area. Constructed in the early 1920's, it was the home for A.L. Kramer, operator of Engelman Gardens. Today, the House serves as the base for the Llano Grande Center's trainings, computer lab and board meetings.



*This tree, located at the front of the Llano Grande House, is one of several that was damaged or completely ripped out of the ground during Hurricane Dolly this past summer, causing damage to some parts of the Llano Grande House. Repairs to the fence and the historic LG House were made this past January.*

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said Edgar Diaz, a senior at EEHS who helped write the grant.

"Llano Grande's college readiness program will help create broader access to college opportunities for the community," said Greg Weatherford YAB board member.

Llano Grande is one of 73 organizations to receive a service-learning, youth-led grant across the United States and Canada. More than 500 grant requests were received by the Board.

"State Farm supports service-learning because it combines service to the community with classroom curriculum in a hands-on approach to mastering subject material while fostering civic responsibility," said Robert Elizalde, State Farm Agent. "The State Farm Youth Advisory Board is a prime example of State Farm's commitment to education, our community and our youth."

## from ENCORE, pg. 1

The one-year grant will also support the Llano Grande Center's outreach campaign aimed at informing the parents of all 1,500 Edcouch-Elsa High School students about college and how to begin preparing for it.

"We are excited to be a part of ENCORE," said

Llano Grande Associate Director Delia Perez. "This opportunity will allow us to work with an even greater number of students and their families and will deepen our long-standing partnership with Edcouch-Elsa High School."