

Llano Grande Center for Research and Development



November 2008

www.llanogrande.org

LG AWARDED TWO STATE FARM GRANTS

The Llano Grande Center can definitely say it has a good neighbor.

The Center was awarded two separate grants this month by the philanthropic arm of State Farm Insurance. Both grants are related to service learning programs being developed by Llano Grande.

A \$4,100 award was given to the Center and its students under State Farm's Ready, Set, Drive! campaign, an initiative aimed at promoting safe driving skills to teenagers. Students worked with Llano Grande staff members to develop a local campaign that will focus specifically on urging high school students to stay focused on the road while they are behind the wheel. The "Don't Drive While Distracted" campaign will include posters placed around the school, the production of video infomercials, and a grassroots effort to talk to students face-to-face about the dangers of driving while attempting to do other tasks like talking on the phone, eating or putting on makeup.



A separate award of \$25,000 was made to the Center under State Farm's Good Neighbor Citizenship initiative. This grant focuses specifically on service learning, and supports Llano Grande's efforts to share our model of community engagement with other school districts across the Rio Grande Valley. Through this grant, the Center will conduct trainings with teachers and

students from five different high schools, sharing Llano Grande's curriculum and pedagogy for community change. The Center will also work with each school group to develop service learning projects at their respective campuses.

These grants continue the partnership that the Center has enjoyed with State Farm for eight years now, with the insurance company having awarded more than \$350,000 to support Llano Grande's programming during that time.

EE WALKOUT ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATED IN LG CLASS, *THE MONITOR*

It can probably be safely said that much of the Llano Grande Center's own passion and philosophy on student empowerment and social activism come from the lessons of our forefathers who bravely walked out of Edcouch-Elsa High School in November 1968.

As student activists, those leaders embodied a spirit that the Llano Grande Center now tries to foster in our youth today. By studying the images, voices and writings of those students before them, our youth today recognize the ability they have to challenge traditional power structures and create meaningful change.

see **WALKOUT**, pg. 4



A photo of Edcouch-Elsa High School protesters featured in The Monitor in November 1968.

YVETTE RODRIGUEZ SAYS GOODBYE TO LLANO GRANDE OUR OFFICE MANAGER HEADS BACK TO UTPA TO EARN HER COLLEGE DEGREE

Office Manager Yvette Rodriguez is pursuing a dream of hers – to head back to college and finish what she started.

And as she gears up to go back into the classroom, she leaves a void in the Llano Grande staff, as Yvette has been the Center’s part-time office manager for the past three-and-a-half years. She plans on resigning from the Center at the end of December this year so that she can pursue school full-time.

Yvette has worked with the Center on-and-off since high school. After graduating from Edcouch-Elsa in 1999, she began attending the University of Texas-Pan American, first full-time, and later part-time. She rejoined the Center as a part-time employee in 2005, working as the Center’s office manager. Later, she decided to take time off of studies to focus on other priorities.

Motivated by her family, she said she is now ready to head back to UTPA full-time to earn her degree.



Yvette only has about a year of school left before she earns her degree in history.

The Llano Grande Center is excited to see her pursuing her dream of finishing college, and congratulates her efforts.

SECOND COMMUNITY LEARNING EXCHANGE HELD AT ROCA

People from across the country literally came together around issues of community change and leadership development at the second Community Learning Exchange held this past month at ROCA, Inc.

Llano Grande participated in the weekend conference, which is an offshoot of the Kellogg Leadership for Community Change (KLCC) initiative. People from the ten KLCC sites, as well as people from outside community organizations, school districts and other non-profits, were invited to attend the event as a way to learn from each other about strategies for community change.

This exchange, hosted by the Chelsea,

MA-based ROCA, focused on issues of social justice and community development, particularly through the use of a conversation technology known as “circle.” ROCA uses this technology to facilitate conversations in a safe space where people’s voices are given room to be heard. Sitting in a circle, the participants face each other and hear each other out as they discuss sometimes tense issues.

The gathering was the second in a series of learning exchanges being coordinated by the Center for Ethical Leadership and Llano Grande. The next exchange is scheduled for March 2009 and being hosted by the Pueblo of Laguna Department of Education in New Mexico.



Participants from around the country sat in circle during the second Community Learning Exchange hosted this November at ROCA, Inc. in Chelsea, MA. The circle is a social technology used by ROCA and taught at the CLE as a tool for community development.

LG TRAINS NEW MEXICO STUDENTS IN DIGITAL STORYTELLING

Digital storytelling continues to remain a strong component of the community change efforts happening in the Native American community, who invited the Llano Grande Center back for another digital storytelling training.

Llano Grande staff members Juan Ozuna and Olga Cardoso and intern Steven Ozuna were in Laguna, New Mexico this past month leading students and teachers through the process of creating their own digital stories, a tool being developed there for cultural preservation and community action.



Llano Grande staff member Olga Cardoso shows Laguna student Ethan Lewis various editing techniques for creating his digital story.

Sponsored by the Laguna Education Foundation (LEF), the participants ranged in age from 13 to 35. The group spent the weekend learning how to develop their own personal story, work with video equipment to record their narrative, and use film-editing software to produce their digital story.

Digital stories are short, narrative-driven films

LG BOARD MEETING SCHEDULED FOR DECEMBER

The next Llano Grande Center meeting of the Board of Directors has been scheduled for December 15th and 16th.

Coinciding with the annual Llano Grande Christmas Party, the meeting should see decisions made on many of the Llano Grande Center's programming and policies for the new year.

The board is also expected to make some decisions regarding the introduction of new board members.



Llano Grande intern Steven Ozuna shares with Laguna youth strategies for developing a personal story as part of the digital story process.

that use photos, documents, videos and music to tell a personal story.

Many of the group had little experience with the medium of digital stories, though all of the participants were able to produce a complete story by the end of the training. Participants' stories reflected the culture of their people, focusing on issues of language, family and tradition.

Since Llano Grande first led this community through a digital storytelling training back in 2006, the Laguna Education Foundation and the Laguna Department of Education have made many investments in technology and manpower to continue to motivate young people there to use digital storytelling. Arthur Joe, a participant in the first training, is now the Media and Technology Director for the LEF and was responsible for the coordination of this training.

Although the Center's board policies call for a five-member board, there are currently only four sitting board members, including Board Chair Miguel Guajardo, Cristina Salinas, Stella Flores and Maribel Saenz.

Center staff and board members have been in the process of recruiting candidates for the fifth spot, as well as considering the possible creation of new board seats.

**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.**

CORPS OF STUDENT WORKERS HELPING LG

The Llano Grande Center has a group of high school and college students helping out with the many aspects of our programming and day-to-day operations.

This year, four Americorps interns and a college work-study student are taking the lead on programs including after-school activities and alumni network development.

Edcouch-Elsa High School seniors Victoria Lopez, Arturo Rodriguez, Jr., Andrew Segura and Gabriela Torres will be working with the Center all year under Americorps Youth Harvest, which promotes

service learning through tutoring and mentoring. These students will be engaging other Llano Grande youth during the Center's after-school "College Night" "Movie Night" and "Project Night."

College sophomore Steven Ozuna, currently attending the University of Texas-Pan American, is working as a Llano Grande intern this year through UTPA's workstudy program. Steven is researching new ways to reach out to Llano Grande alumni through new media such as myspace and facebook.

STUDENTS RAISING MONEY FOR COLLEGE TRIP

A group of Llano Grande students are actively raising money again this year for the annual visit to colleges.

This year students will be visiting schools throughout the Midwest, including Kalamazoo College, Northwestern University, Michigan Statue University and University of Chicago. The students will spend a week living in dorms, attending classes and visiting with college students and administrators as a way to experience life as a college student and bring perspective to their college application process.

College trips by Edcouch-Elsa students began under Llano Grande Center Executive Director Francisco Guajardo in the early 1990's, when he coordinated

with students a trip to Ivy League Universities. College trips have continued to remain an integral part of Llano Grande's programming since then, with trips having been made to universities all across the country.

The eleven students participating in this year's trip, who are mix of 9-12 graders, have a goal of raising \$10,000 in time for the trip scheduled at the end of January.

Donations are currently being sought, and the students are in the process of fundraising through plate sales, garage sales, and sponsorships.

Anyone interested in donating is asked to call the Llano Grande Center at (956) 262-4474.

from WALKOUT, pg. 1

The study of the EEHS Walkout in the Llano Grande class takes on even more significance this year as the Center celebrates the 40th anniversary of the event, marked by a special three-day series in *The Monitor* this month.

Students are learning about the walkout through several sources, including firsthand accounts from oral histories collected by the Center; newspaper articles from 1968 documenting the event; and videos about the walkout, including a copy of the original national

news story produced by CBS and introduced by Walter Cronkite on its Evening News.

To commemorate the walkout, reporters from *The Monitor* conducted several interviews with those who participated in the protest and those who opposed it, along with Llano Grande students, to understand the impact the walkout has on students today.

The three-day series of articles in *The Monitor* ran from November 13-15, marking the anniversary of the walkout that began on November 13, 1968.