



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HARLINGEN EARNS GOVERNOR'S AWARD FOR BEAUTIFICATION

March 10, 2015 - City of Harlingen elected representatives and administrators learned recently that the city will receive a \$250,000 beautification grant thanks to a first-place finish in the **2015 Governor's Community Achievement Award** competition.

Funding will go toward further beautification projects and ongoing initiatives that led to the award, Mayor Chris Boswell said. "It's a tremendous honor for our citizens and organizations that volunteer to assist the city improve its image or environment," he said. "Many people worked together for years to allow the Capital of the Rio Grande Valley to reach this goal."

According to the Keep Texas Beautiful website, the KTB organization in partnership with the Texas Department of Transportation annually has offered the Governor's Community Achievement Awards to 10 Texas communities with the best grassroots environmental programs in the state. The awards distribute \$2 million in funding from TxDOT across the 10 communities, with the amount based on population size. Cities receiving awards will be recognized at a special ceremony Tuesday, June 16, 2015, during the 48th Annual Keep Texas Beautiful Conference in Fort Worth.

A community's environmental program is judged on achievements in community leadership and coordination, public awareness, education, beautification and community improvement, litter prevention and cleanup, solid waste management, and litter law and illegal dumping enforcement. The funds are used for landscaping projects along local rights of way.

"The real success is visible throughout a *clean* Harlingen thanks to the pride and hard work year-round by groups and private individuals that partnered with Keep Harlingen Beautiful and the city. I am sure the community will be very excited about this statewide recognition," Boswell said.

Many KHB events are funded by revenue from the Harlingen Recycling Center, which brought in \$91,289 in 2014, according to the grant application. Combined volunteer labor in 2014 totaled an estimated 8,500 hours. Among the debris removed by volunteers and city employees from Harlingen in 2014 were 81 tons of litter, 1,636 used tires, and 506 bags of trash.

The Code Enforcement Office, Keep Harlingen Beautiful, and the Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District coordinated many public education campaigns in 2014 such as recycling clubs at some elementary schools and “Operation Crackdown” with the Texas National Guard to remove unsafe, dilapidated structures.

Other projects included landscaping around the city’s 700 acres of parks, schools and public buildings. Eleven organizations have taken responsibility for 22 miles of Adopt-A-Highway miles within city limits. There were flowers, bushes and tree plantings at numerous sites and the City of Harlingen has created an efficient maintenance schedule to reduce manpower allocation while increasing environmental cleanup efforts.

“We will celebrate receiving this grant, but we won’t rest. Our citizens want this initiative to build more momentum as together we continue our commitment to improve our community,” the mayor concluded.



Students from Gutierrez Middle School in Harlingen plant live oak trees along the 25th Street Hike & Bike Trail during an Arbor Day project on February 27, 2015. It’s part of an ongoing initiative led by Keep Harlingen Beautiful and the City of Harlingen to improve the city’s image. The city earned first place in the 2015 Governor’s Community Achievement Award competition to qualify for a \$250,000 grant.



Volunteers clean up the median area of Morgan Boulevard and Business 77 / Sunshine Strip on October 25, 2014, as numerous citizens and community service organizations joined the City of Harlingen and Keep Harlingen Beautiful to observe National Make A Difference Day. The city’s combined beautification efforts earned first place statewide to qualify for a \$250,000 grant with the 2015 Governor’s Community Achievement Award.

For more information about KHB and City of Harlingen cleanup activities go online to www.myharlingen.us. Then, click on “Departments” and go to either the “Code Enforcement” or “Keep Harlingen Beautiful” web pages. Information about the Governor’s Achievement Award is online at www.ktb.org or by calling (800) CLEAN-TX.

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