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2007-2008
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Brilliant in the Basics

Message from Executive Director, David Cleveland

Nine-year-old Shea O’Gorman certainly did not expect the letter she received from Apple Computers. The third grader sent a letter to Apple founder and President Steve Jobs several months ago complimenting the company for creating her iPod Nano which became her prized possession. In the letter, Miss O’Gorman suggested Apple include a lyrics feature on new devices so she and her friends could sing along with their favorite artists. The response came not from Jobs or the firm’s customer service staff, but from Apple’s legal team—which said the company does not accept product suggestions. Apparently, the strongly worded cease-and-desist letter came from Apple’s Chief Legal Counsel and, according to the girl’s mother sent Shea to her room crying.

Assuming the above incident is sourced and reported accurately, it is reasonable to assume that Mr. Jobs did not intend for such a letter to be sent. Why? Customer input and ongoing satisfaction is critical to any businesses’ ongoing success. The same is true in the public not-for-profit world. The East Texas Council of Governments (ETCOG) exists for the sole purpose of meeting customer needs which ideally translates into exceeding customer expectations. As you might expect, ETCOG is committed to continuous improvement and toward that end recently adopted what I am temporarily referring to as our “Customer Service Creed”. The “creed”, as set forth below, establishes clear expectations for how ETCOG staff will engage each other and our customers.

Look for a way to say “yes” to the customer within appropriate legal and ethical boundaries.

Strive to exceed customer expectations.

Listen to the customer first; confirm the message and facilitate a solution IF requested by the customer.

Approach work with a positive attitude, always looking for ways to improve our service.

Be a candid, kind and encouraging member of the team.

Apply the 4-way test to the things we think, say, or do:

- 1. Is it the truth?*
- 2. Is it fair to all concerned?*
- 3. Will it build goodwill and better friendships?*
- 4. Will it be beneficial to all concerned?*



It is incorrect to conclude that ETCOG has not been committed to these standards of internal and external conduct in the past. In fact, I believe quite the opposite to be true, although they may not have been expressed in the same way. However, as an organization grows and changes over time, it is normal for some drifting to take place. When this phenomenon occurs on athletic teams, it is common to hear coaches preach the merits of “getting back to the fundamentals” of laying a foundation, establishing expectations, and coaching repeatedly to the expected performance standards so the team is positioned to execute the game plan when it counts. As the team progresses through this time intensive process, uncertainty is replaced by clear role definition, individual success, at least in part is defined by the overall success of the team; and a corporate sense of synergistic team identity is developed. I believe ETCOG is beginning to navigate a similar change process now.

ETCOG has been growing and changing in recent months and more change is likely as we seek to improve our service. If you are reading this newsletter you are most likely an ETCOG customer, partner, or teammate. As such, I wanted you to be aware of our renewed commitment to our customers and each other (as expressed in the “creed”) so you can help us as we strive to become “brilliant in the basics” of customer service and teamwork.

Serving a Fourteen County Region

Providing services and programs to East Texas seniors, employers and job seekers

Assisting Tyler in Goodyear Plant Closing

ETEDD and Workforce Solutions East Texas partner to help community transition

December 2007 saw the end of tire production at the Goodyear facility in Tyler, Texas. While this is not a complete closure of the facility it did result in the loss of approximately 900 jobs to Smith and the surrounding counties. As a result, Workforce Solutions East Texas and the East Texas Economic Development District (ETEDD) have been working diligently to assist the City of Tyler and surrounding communities to alleviate the devastating job loss that has resulted from the closure of tire production.



The ETEDD has been working closely with the Tyler Economic Development Council to apply for an Economic Adjustment Grant from the Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration. The status of this grant is still pending; however, it looks very favorable that this grant application will be approved. This grant will assist with the financing of an economic plan to help the City plan for events such as this in the future and to put measures into place that will help to reduce the impact of plant closures in the area. It will also help the City of Tyler and Tyler EDC with recruiting new employers to the area.

It appears that there may still be hope for the future. Since Goodyear has decided not to close the facility completely and to keep a small workforce employed in the rubber mixing facility, many in the area feel that there may be a slim chance that in the future, the plant may reopen to tire production. Unfortunately this would be far down the road and currently there are no plans to reopen in the near future.

Transportation Update

Minibus staff became a part of the East Texas Council of Governments in September 2007 and ETCOG officially became the rural provider of transportation services to the 14-county region. As a result of the merger, ETCOG now employs over 100 total staff. The transportation department also welcomed two new vehicles donated by Denton County Transportation Authority. The new vehicles each have less than 150,000 miles on them, seat twelve passengers and are handicap accessible.

A new maintenance agreement has been approved between ETCOG and Longview Transit bringing a partnership which is the first of its kind in the state. The 39 buses in the rural transportation fleet managed by ETCOG will now be maintained by Longview Transit. All parts and supplies will be provided at Longview Transit's cost of each part, plus the allocated cost of

purchasing or stocking fees associated with each part. Parts will not have any mark-up allocated for profit. "By contract-

ing with Longview Transit, whose mechanics are familiar with these types of vehicles, we should be able to shorten the time our buses have to be off the road for routine maintenance," said David Cleveland, executive director. The agreement began in January and will bring a savings of approximately 5%.

"By contracting with Longview Transit, whose mechanics are familiar with these types of vehicles, we should be able to shorten the time our buses have to be off the road for routine maintenance."

EAST TEXAS RURAL TRANSIT
3301 WEST MARSHALL, SUITE 202
LONGVIEW, TX 75601
903-753-2958
1-800-590-3371

Tips for calling 9-1-1 from a cell phone

In today's ever-changing world of technology, no greater impact is felt than on those answering the 9-1-1 call for help. An estimated 82 million wireless 9-1-1 calls will be made this year. As those in the professional organizations of NENA (National Emergency Number Association) and APCO (Association of Public Communication Officials) International work to educate those in a position to make a difference at the Federal and State Levels, the local dispatcher struggles to get the caller the assistance they so gravely are in need of. But the caller cannot understand why the dispatcher did not answer in two rings? Why did the call go to another 9-1-1 call center?

First you have to understand what a Wireless Phone is; it's a radio. Radio waves can be bent, refracted and distorted. So a call may be answered not only by the wrong 9-1-1 PSAP (Public Safety Answering Point), but it could even be hundreds of miles away, requiring the answering agency to transfer your call. Or your 9-1-1 call may have reached a tower that has not been deployed for 9-1-1 routing it was turned up prior to completing the requirements to deliver the call correctly. It came not into the 9-1-1 system as expected, but it reached the 9-1-1 operator by dialing their administrative telephone number.

In your area the East Texas Council of Governments is working diligently to identify and when possible correct the many pitfalls that the 9-1-1 Caller may encounter when seeking assistance. Your Sheriff or Police Department will need you to provide information not only for the emergency, but to help identify the tower that is failing. So remember that those "extra" questions are important pieces to identifying and correcting a problem. In the meantime, remember these points when calling 9-1-1.

All cell phones dial 9-1-1 and press "send" or "talk". Give the 9-1-1 call taker your location using the address, cross streets or landmarks. Most cell phones provide an approximate, but not exact, location, but the 9-1-1 system may not receive location information. Give the call taker your location immediately. Calls may not arrive at the correct 9-1-1 center and may need to be transferred. Calls may drop or fail to go through based on signal strength. Keep your phone charged. The 9-1-1 system is not equipped to receive text messages.

Kids' Cell phones are unique also. Some phones marketed



ETCOG'S 9-1-1 EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT IS COMPRISED OF GIS, 9-1-1 ADDRESSING, MAPPING AND DATABASE ANALYSIS

to children have a non-traditional dialing pad. An adult may need to program the phone to dial 9-1-1. And some cannot be called back by the call-taker if the call is dropped. Teach your children to dial 9-1-1 only in an emergency. Help your children understand what an emergency is by providing examples and help your children learn their address and phone number.

Inactive cell phones are still capable of dialing 9-1-1. These are phones that have no service plan. The 9-1-1 system may not receive location information. Give the call-taker your location immediately. If

you are disconnected, they will not be able to call you back. Always on all 9-1-1 calls stay calm, speak slowly, state what is wrong and where you need help, and stay on the phone until the 9-1-1 call taker tells you to hang up.

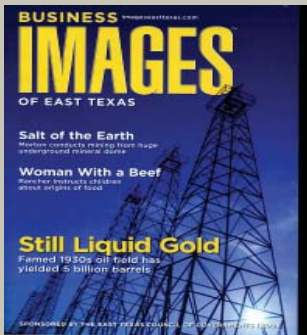
"...East Texas Council of Governments is working diligently to identify and when possible correct the many pitfalls that the 9-1-1 caller may encounter..."

Area Agency on Aging Housing for Elderly and Disabled Clients

ETCOG's Area Agency on Aging (AAA) received \$48,257 in Housing Bond funds in the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2007. We were originally slated to receive only \$22,000, but additional funding became available and we received an added \$26,257. The original focus was on Marion County, but with the additional funding we were able to expand this program into Camp and Wood counties. We repaired homes for 22 clients: four in Camp, two in Wood, and the remainder in Marion County. The repairs included, but were not limited to, roofs, bathroom repairs, plumbing, ceiling repairs and flooring replacements. Through our partnership with Center for Housing Resources in Dallas and Mr. Richard Hermans, a local contractor, we realized \$78,307.28 of repairs in these three counties.

In addition to the Housing Bond project, the AAA was able to repair homes for 92 clients across all 14 counties. We expended \$47,698.09 of Title III-B and III-E funding on these repairs. Again, our partnerships with Center for Housing Resources in Dallas and other local vendors, as well as other initiatives, brought \$263,234.51 of repairs to homes in East Texas.

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as seen through the eyes
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**Call ETCOG today for
your copy!**

Housing for Elderly and Disabled Clients

(continued from page 3)

We are currently working with the Center for Housing Resources to expand our partnership to include up to \$1 million to be expended across a three-year period. This has the potential to make a significant impact in the lives of many clients who are living in sub-standard housing.

The mission of the Residential Repair program of AAA is to allow seniors to live independently in their own homes, in a safe and sanitary condition. Funding for this program is limited, but the need is great. With almost 400 seniors on the waiting list for repairs, there is sometimes such an extensive wait for services that clients can no longer continue living in their homes due to the condition of the home. Identifying programs such as the one with the Center for Housing Resources allows us to provide repairs at a minimal cost to us. If your organization or civic group is interested in volunteering time to work on a wheelchair ramp or other project, please call us at 1.800.442.8845 ext 215.



THIS IS ONE OF THE MANY WHEELCHAIR RAMPS THAT ARE BUILT FOR CLIENTS SO THEY CAN EASILY ACCESS THEIR HOMES

2007 a Record Breaking Year for ETRDC \$2.6 million loaned to regional businesses

Fiscal Year 2007 has been a record breaking year for the East Texas Regional Development Company (ETRDC). The ETRDC Board of Directors approved eight 504 loans with Small Business Administration (SBA) approving seven (one loan was withdrawn by the borrower prior to submission to SBA). This marks a sharp increase in loan production for the ETRDC, and is expected to continue into the future.

This year also saw a major change in the staff for the ETRDC. With the retirement of Glynn Knight as Executive Director and the departure of Mark Sweeney as Director of Regional Development and Services, the ETRDC came under new leadership. David Cleveland assumed the position of Executive Director in May and Luke Kimbrough was promoted to Director of Public Information and Regional Services soon after. Julie Burnfield, Community and Economic Development Manager, and Rick McKnight, Environmental Manager, also joined the team as loan officers. With the addition of these new loan officers, it is expected that the ETRDC will be able to approve even more loans in the coming year.

With rates ranging 1.5 to 2 percentage points below WSJ Prime, and terms up to 20 years, the SBA 504 is becoming more popular to small businesses throughout the State. With the expansion of territories by the SBA the ETRDC is now able to assist businesses anywhere in the State of Texas with their fixed asset and long life equipment needs.

To learn more about the SBA 504 program, contact ETRDC staff at 903.984.8641.



**SPLASH KINGDOM WATER PARK IN CANTON,
TEXAS WAS FUNDED THROUGH THE
ASSISTANCE OF THE SBA 504 PROGRAM**

Workforce Solutions East Texas

Improving the quality of life in this area through economic development by providing a first-class workforce for present and future businesses

Celebrating a New Name and New Gilmer Location



On January 8, East Texas Workforce Board celebrated new beginnings as Workforce Solutions East Texas Board. The name change has been elected for all Texas Workforce Development Boards through

branding initiatives outlined by the Texas Workforce Commission.

The transition to the statewide common brand name of Workforce Solutions is to strengthen the network of Texas' 28 Boards and commit to the highest level of service to customers statewide. Our local workforce centers, previously named, East Texas Workforce Center will now be known as Workforce Solutions East Texas.

In conjunction with announcing our name change, the day marked the grand opening and ribbon cutting of Workforce Solutions East Texas Gilmer center. Relocating to a new office on Texas 154 in Gilmer, the facility offers expanded office space and services.

The center is equipped with new features such as an employer interview area and expanded classroom space. Several computer stations, typing test area, a fax/phone station and childrens play area are also available for customer use.

"We upgraded our Longview center a year ago, and with this new building in Gilmer, we are trying to follow the same architectural theme to keep a consistent look between our offices," said Wendell Holcombe, director of workforce development

programs. Renovations are currently being made to Workforce Solutions East Texas Quitman center to have the same amenities, professional appearance and color scheme as Longview and Gilmer.

Workforce Solutions East Texas assists employers and job seekers with finding positions to match their skills. Visit our website at easttexasworkforce.org.



BELOW: WORKFORCE BOARD MEMBERS, CITY OFFICIALS AND GUESTS CUT THE RIBBON AT NEW GILMER CENTER LOCATED ON TEXAS 154



Since 1983, the East Texas Regional Development Company has provided small businesses in Texas with the financing they need to expand or even start their business.

The East Texas Regional Development Company or ETRDC is a private, non-profit, organization formed for the purpose of assisting small businesses. The ETRDC has helped many Texas business owners achieve long term financing for all of their business needs.

To learn more about how the ETRDC can help your business with its financing needs, please call or see our website.

(903) 984-3989 • www.etrdc.com





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The East Texas Council of Governments is a voluntary association of counties, cities, school districts and special districts within the fourteen-county East Texas region. ETCOG assists local governments in planning for common needs, cooperating for mutual benefit and coordinating for sound regional development. Established in 1970, ETCOG, either directly, or through its contractors, provides programs and services for East Texas seniors, employers, and job seekers. ETCOG and its contractors also build the 9-1-1 emergency call delivery system, provide peace officer training and homeland security planning services; and deliver rural transportation services, business finance programs, and environmental grant funding for the region.



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