



## 2018 County Historical Commission (CHC) Project Descriptions

Project descriptions below are taken from reports submitted by select Distinguished Service Award-winning CHCs. County population and appointee counts are provided to demonstrate the breadth of successful preservation efforts that can come from large and small CHCs located in rural and urban areas of the state.

### **Atascosa CHC—Battle of Medina Symposium**

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*County Population: 48,981*      *CHC Appointee Count: 18*

In its 18<sup>th</sup> year, Atascosa CHC continues to sponsor the annual history symposium and commemorative ceremony for the Battle of Medina. Open to the public, this free event promotes the statewide significance of this battle—events preceding the battle and its aftermath—and Tejano contributions toward Texas Independence. The morning portion of the event was held in an area under a grove of oak trees near the Battle of Medina historical marker. Colors were presented by a large group of re-enactors in period dress who also fire a volley at the end. Lineal groups, such as the Daughters of the American Revolution, Daughters and Sons of the Republic of Texas, Society of 1812, and others laid wreaths to honor those who died in this battle. Lunch was provided on the campus of the county annex in Leming and served by the Leming Volunteer Fire Department. Afternoon activities featured a variety of speakers—university professors, archaeologists, and historians. A separate building housed interesting exhibits and books for sale. Program partners included Texas Society Sons of the American Revolution, Medina CHC, and community of Leming.

### **Carson CHC—Regional Tourism Partnerships**

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*County Population: 6,032*      *CHC Appointee Count: 15*

For several years, Carson CHC appointees have worked with the Panhandle Tourism and Marketing Council (PTMC), which serves 26 counties of the Texas Panhandle. Council membership includes Texas Plains Trail Region (TPTR) members, CHC appointees, chambers of commerce, and economic development corporations from various communities throughout the top 26 counties, along with several members of the Route 66 Associations in Amarillo and Shamrock. These partners combine fiscal and human resources to promote and bring tourism events to the region. For example, we supported the 2018 Route 66 Festival in Shamrock that attracted hundreds of history lovers all ages from across the nation. Carson CHC provided monetary and in-kind support for the event, which provided a great opportunity to promote area attractions. Going forward PTMC has merged with TPTR to make the most of participants' time and limited resources. CHC appointees serve on TPTR board to provide county history expertise and promote Texas' historic sites.

### **Collin CHC—Online Mapping of County Historic Sites**

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*County Population: 969,603*      *CHC Appointee Count: 18*

Collin CHC continues to populate our interactive mapping system with information about historic sites in the county. After collecting stories and photos from volunteers/donors, the information is sent to the county

GIS staff to update an online map that is accessible to the public. Sites are shown as a decorative dot on the map, that when clicked, provides information associated with the site. At times, information includes photos of existing historic resources or buildings that have since been demolished. While some use the map as a history research tool, others use the map to discover new areas of the county. For this reason, GPS information is included for viewers who would like to visit the sites. This effort is a work in progress—we continue to populate the map with stories that tell the history of the county. We are grateful for our partnership with county staff who help the CHC share our history with the public.

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### **Comal CHC—Staging National Register Nominations**

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*County Population: 141,009*      *CHC Appointee Count: 25*

After completing a county-wide survey in 2014, Comal CHC used the survey to identify potential properties for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places (NR). This type of designation enables our county to recognize properties that have historical significance and create opportunities for owners to pursue future tax incentives. This past year the Walzem Homestead, Honey Creek Springs Ranch, Riley’s Tavern, Anhalt Halle, and the Arnold-Rauch-Brandt Homestead all received the NR designation. Celebrations were held for the Walzem Homestead, Riley’s Tavern and the Arnold-Rauch-Brandt Homestead. The public was invited, along with local decision-makers, state legislators, and the THC. Consultant fees associated with NR nominations were funded by Certified Local Government (CLG) grant funds and local match amounts. Upcoming grants will fund nomination preparation for the 1918 Fire Station Museum and the Mayer-Kappellmann Homestead. Applications for future grant cycles will address nominations for the Pape-Borchers Homestead and the Mission Valley School and Teacherage.

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### **Gonzales CHC—Preserving History Associated with the Edwards School**

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*County Population: 20,893*      *CHC Appointee Count: 11*

Gonzales CHC expanded its programming by sponsoring a History Fair in conjunction with the Edwards School reunion. Attendees were invited to share school and family photographs, family Bibles, documents, and annuals related to the African American Edwards High School Campus, students and teachers. Participants received a digital copy of their collection. Information was handed out regarding Gonzales CHC cemetery preservation projects and the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Edwards School District. This event was a joint effort made by the CHC, Edwards Community Center Association, and local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

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### **Hays CHC—Community Outreach at the Hays County Courthouse Museum**

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*County Population: 214,485*      *CHC Appointee Count: 21*

Hays CHC maintains and operates a museum on the history of Hays County on the ground floor of our historic Hays County Courthouse. This effort presents a variety of partnership and outreach opportunities. Each year we give museum tours to school groups and senior citizens centers. The museum keeps traditional hours of operation but also accommodates special tours by appointment. Its location provides a steady stream of visitors. The historic county courthouse houses the county commissioners court and offices of the county

judge. Those attending commissioners court often drop by the museum to view the exhibits that feature information on county history—Jack C. Hays, historic schools, historic ranches, and a wide variety of topics of interest. Because the museum is located at the center of historic downtown, the CHC works closely with the San Marcos Main Street Program and actively participates in downtown events. We also participate in the popular *Sights and Sounds of Christmas* event in San Marcos.

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### **Jasper CHC—Research for Finding Your Roots Program**

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*County Population: 35,561*      *CHC Appointee Count: 16*

We were contacted by the producers of the PBS series "Finding Your Roots" concerning an episode they were researching. We were asked to provide information about descendants of the person being researched along with photographs, etc. We gladly took on this project, especially because it opened a window into the post-civil war era of our county. We identified descendants and arranged interviews, visited and photographed cemeteries, and provided insight for the producers concerning historical, social, and demographic aspects of Jasper County. We researched our archives and other county records for details on these subjects. Members of our community offered insight and information to help us understand the genealogical connections within the families being researched, offering various details about the era following the Civil War. This project was exciting and educational for our appointees and allowed us to build a file for future reference by the public. The airing of this episode of "Finding Your Roots" will spotlight our county and its diverse history.

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### **Jeff Davis CHC—Preserving History of Chihuahua Neighborhood**

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*County Population: 2,280*      *CHC Appointee Count: 13*

To research and secure photographs for a new wayside exhibit on the Chihuahua neighborhood, the Jeff Davis CHC held two open forums at the Catholic Church Hall in Fort Davis. CHC appointees gave a brief overview of our exhibit project, and a history of the neighborhood including a slide show. The meetings were well attended, which resulted in gathering additional information on where families lived and where buildings had been located, along with photographs to document findings.

Chihuahua—or “Chihuahuita,” as it is called by locals—has been a Mexican American neighborhood since the 1890s. Our planning for this exhibit has encouraged many who live there (or whose grandparents and great grandparents lived there) to become more interested in the history and heritage of this neighborhood. An exhibit dedication has been planned to take place around the Fourth of July so that locals and tourists can participate. Additionally, appointees are planning a walking tour of Chihuahuita that will be open to the public.

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### **Jefferson CHC—Advocacy Efforts to Save Tyrrell Park Community Building**

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*County Population: 256,299*      *CHC Appointee Count: 12*

Jefferson CHC has been deeply involved in efforts to preserve and restore the Tyrrell Park Community Building, a long-neglected structure built in the 1930's by the Civilian Conservation Corps as part of a Works Progress Administration project. Building's walls are made of shell and concrete bricks and beams were hand

hewn from local Cypress trees. Located in Beaumont, this historic structure has hosted dances, family reunions, graduation parties, and other community events for generations.

For several years, the CHC met with city officials and urged prioritizing a preservation plan for the building, which has sustained significant damage from several hurricanes. After learning that the City planned to remove the building's roof, CHC appointees attended and spoke at several public meetings to advocate for the building. Eventually, the proposed roof removal was denied. As community efforts to save the building commenced, CHC appointees met with community leaders, city officials, and others to emphasize the need for a preservation strategy and a full restoration of the building. The Tyrrell Park Coalition was formed to spearhead this important preservation effort; the coalition was made up of representatives from the Jefferson CHC, Beaumont Heritage Society, Beaumont Council of Garden Clubs (who built and maintain a botanical garden at Tyrrell Park), and other community activists.

Influenced by this partnership effort, the City of Beaumont is developing a preservation plan to save the Tyrrell Park Community Building and re-purpose it as a visitor's center for Cattail Marsh—a wildlife and birding area the City has developed at Tyrrell Park. While concern remains for some proposed work, partners continue to advocate for preservation for the entire building and reallocation of funds necessary to address a full rehabilitation. Once re-purposed, advocates believe that its new use as a visitor's center for the park will draw many locals and tourists who are interested in birding and heritage travel.

### **Jim Hogg CHC—Preserving the Old County Jail**

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*County Population: 5,202*      *CHC Appointee Count: 14*

Jim Hogg CHC continues efforts to protect and restore the 114-year-old Jim Hogg County Jail, a historic, two-story structure that houses the Jim Hogg County Museum. The CHC partners with the local museum organization to restore this neglected, historic jail. After a recent clean-up and interior restoration, we replaced the roof and installed air conditioning, followed by electrical work. Other additions included indoor track lighting, permanent metal signage, a decorative windmill, and fencing. Although climate control provided by the air conditioning unit helps, the effect of humidity on the exhibits continues to be a concern, which will be addressed in the coming year.

Since the Old Jail is owned by the county, our officials are aware of the problems and involved in the rehabilitation planning/implementation. These rehabilitation efforts also find support from our community because the museum is the primary source for information related to the county's historic and cultural heritage. Our community and the museum were highlighted by a regional magazine and TV station this year, which has attracted visitors who want to know more about our town's history. Although challenging, we continue to make improvements to the Old Jail knowing that our efforts will impact generations to come.

### **Kerr CHC—Oral History Efforts**

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*County Population: 51,720*      *CHC Appointee Count: 63*

Continuing our oral history efforts, Kerr CHC added eleven (11) oral histories to the archives, which has more than 100 on file. Each oral history features an hour-long video interview with a county resident who has contributed to the history and/or development of Kerr County. These interviews are transcribed into print; videos and printed format are given to the interviewees. Copies are placed in the Kerr History Center (City of

Kerrville) and Kerr CHC archives at Schreiner University's Logan Library, making them accessible to the public. Another partner organization, the University of North Texas, provides grants associated with its *Portal to Texas History*. Kerr CHC has received an \$1,000 grant for the past four years to digitize our oral history archive, historical books, and publications. The *Portal* hosts this information on its website, again, ensuring that research accessible to the public at large.

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### **Lampasas—Keystone Hotel Rehabilitation**

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*County Population: 7,826*      *CHC Appointee Count: 18*

One of the more significant landmarks in Lampasas County is the 1870 Keystone Hotel, which thrived during the 1870s and 80s with its Sulphur and hot steam bath amenities. After years of disrepair and vandalism, this county landmark has been purchased for rehabilitation. The new owner's goal is to restore the hotel to its original state, furnishing it with proper period pieces. CHC appointees have provided photographs and history books to authenticate and support the project. Lampasas CHC worked with the owner to host a tour and presentation, allowing the public a rare view of the Keystone after many years of vacancy. Interest in the landmark was demonstrated when 80-100 people attended the event. As work progresses, Lampasas CHC shares the history of the hotel with the public through newspaper articles and Facebook posts.

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### **Lavaca County— Alton C. Allen Historical Conference**

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*County Population: 12,212*      *CHC Appointee Count: 72*

Initiated in 1997, our annual Alton C. Allen Historical Conference continues to be a successful Lavaca CHC effort. Selecting a different theme each year, the conference provides an educational/instructional setting for attendees—156 in 2018. The 2018 theme was "Once We Were A Republic," providing a great lineup of educational speakers. Authors of Texas history books filled 12 tables with book vendors present. Our partnership with the local chamber of commerce prompted the CHC to move the conference location to restored buildings on Hallettsville's downtown square, providing additional venue space for the conference.

Additional partners enabled our CHC to enhance the event in small but substantial ways. The newly created Art League displayed their western art, and the floral design class associated with the Hallettsville Agriculture Department provided table decorations for the venues. A partnership with the Region 3 Educational Center in Victoria resulted in continuing education credit for area teachers who could attend. Attendance increased after promoting the event to surrounding counties; five area CHCs were represented. The chamber of commerce reported that several attendees spent the night locally, drawing tourism dollars to our community and supporting local businesses. The conference has become a regional event that encourages residents and visitors to learn more about county history.

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### **Limestone—Digitization Efforts**

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*County Population: 23,527*      *CHC Appointee Count: 11*

One of the efforts of the Limestone CHC has been the digitization of photographs and documents. CHC was given a collection of negatives and proofs from a local photography studio that was in business from the 1950s through the 1980s. Last year, CHC appointees started reviewing the collection that contains thousands

of images and selected almost 2,000 images to be digitized. We anticipate that the next review period will result in digitization of an additional 1,000 images. In time, Limestone CHC hopes to create a searchable database for the scanned images, as well as, properly catalog and archive original negatives and proofs.

### **Lubbock—Lubbock’s First Cotton Gin**

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*County Population: 305,225*      *CHC Appointee Count: 16*

The marker dedication for Lubbock’s First Cotton Gin was a community effort. The ceremony and reception were held at Caviel’s Museum of African American Art, which is located just west of the original site of the gin. In addition to the museum, partners for this dedication included the Plains Cotton Cooperative Association (PCCA), Plains Cotton Growers, and Prosperity Bank. More than 100 people attended the dedication, including two county commissioners, two city council members, and a state senator. The *Avalanche-Journal* featured the marker dedication on its front page and the digital access “lubbockonline,” reaching readers in and around Lubbock County. A photo display of early gins [shown at the dedication] was moved from Caviel’s to Mahon Library in Lubbock for a two-month exhibition. The library draws about 100 daily patrons, community group meetings, and people attending the quarterly book sale. The mobile exhibit is scheduled tentatively for an upcoming PCCA board meeting and the annual Texas Cotton Growers show in Lubbock.

### **McCulloch CHC—Swedish History Project**

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*County Population: 7,957*      *CHC Appointee Count: 12*

McCulloch CHC partners with the University of North Texas (UNT) to digitize items from the CHC’s ongoing Swedish History Project. UNT has digitized more than 100 items from the McCulloch County Swedish History Project that can be accessed on *The Portal to Texas History*. CHC appointees continue to collect and evaluate additional items for the collection. Appointees write metadata for each item, materials are shipped to UNT for digitization, and costs are covered by donations. We hope to close out this project in 2019 with the submission of both the English translation and original Swedish version of *SWEDES IN TEXAS*—a book that was donated to CHC.

### **Marion CHC—Community Outreach Efforts**

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*County Population: 10,064*      *CHC Appointee Count: 9*

Marion CHC hosted an event to celebrate the history of Marion County, acquainting both visitors and citizens with the rich history of our small county. This hour-long program was designed to be entertaining and instructional. Several appointees presented vignettes of county history to a near-capacity crowd. The event was held at one of our county’s most famous tourist destinations, the Excelsior House Hotel, which is a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark. All CHC appointees were involved in planning, research, presentation, and execution of the event. The following community partners contributed to these efforts, as well: Jefferson Historical Museum, the local Jessie Allen Wise Garden Club, the owners of the hotel.

After the presentation, a reception was held so that attendees could mingle with speakers. Attendees asked questions and participated in informal discussions and viewed displays that CHC appointees had

assembled to accompany the program. The event—open to the public at no charge—was advertised to both locals and visitors via the hotels and B&Bs, Facebook, the local newspaper, and a direct mail-out campaign. The program was well-attended and received local media coverage not only in Marion County, but in a regional newspaper in nearby Harrison County.

### **Mason CHC—Proactive Local Preservation Efforts**

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*County Population: 4,222*      *CHC Appointee Count: 16*

Mason CHC's goal is to encourage thoughtful preservation and revitalization of the county. Specific efforts were made to increase awareness of the historic buildings on the square in downtown Mason. In the 1980's, there appeared to be a community interest in maintaining our downtown buildings. Since then, deeds have changed hands, businesses have closed, and owners have retired. To renew interest in preservation, Mason CHC mailed a letter to businesses, building owners, and realtors to help them remember that the Mason Square is in a historic. Mason CHC's letter encouraged owners to consider maintenance that adheres to preservation standards. The letter praised recent repairs, encouraged upkeep of the town square, and offered help to those interested in rehabilitation. This letter is one aspect of an ongoing effort to educate locals on the importance of preservation.

### **Matagorda CHC—Walking and Driving Tours**

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*County Population: 36,840*      *CHC Appointee Count: 40*

For many years, the Hotel Blessing has been a destination for locals and tourists who are looking for a good meal in the hotel café. Precinct buses from Houston (each carrying approximately 30 participants) have been visiting the Blessing Hotel for several years. These tourists expressed interest in the history of the hotel and other historic buildings in Blessing, so CHC appointees began to provide presentations and tours of the hotel. Initially, the tour buses visited five times of year, but tours now average about once a month, due to the popularity of the stop in Blessing.

During the CHC presentations, visitors are given copies of a Blessing Driving Tour and Hawley Cemetery Walking Tour. This promotion catalyzed interest in other sites in Blessing, so CHC appointees developed another driving tour that focused on sites with historical markers. Tour brochures are available at the hotel for tourists and for visitors to Hawley Cemetery. Visitors are encouraged to visit other communities in Matagorda County, especially the town of Matagorda. CHC appointees will continue to develop tours and brochures for the public to continue these educational efforts.

### **Medina CHC—Medina County Hondo Airport Museum**

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*County Population: 50,066*      *CHC Appointee Count: 23*

Medina CHC entered into a partnership agreement with the City of Hondo to establish a Hondo Air Base Museum. Hondo Air Base was one of the most important Air Training Bases during World War II and trained both pilots and navigators. Medina CHC agreed to a Memorandum of Understanding with the Mayor of Hondo, that states the duties and responsibilities of each party. Medina County Commissioners Court has agreed to help fund the effort and the Quihi and New Fountain Historical Commissions have pledge funds,

as well. CHC appointees are in the planning stages for the museum and intend to apply for an historical marker at this site.

### **Montgomery CHC—History Road Rally**

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*County Population: 570,934*      *CHC Appointee Count: 31*

Montgomery CHC sponsored its fifth annual History Road Rally in the south part of the county. Each year, the Rally features local history of a different area of Montgomery County. Representing communities in and beyond Montgomery County, participating teams enjoyed driving around the county following clues to find sites associated with historical figures and events. Each stop provided a history lesson about the county, requiring participants to inspect tombstones, historical markers, and other historic sites. About 100 people from inside and outside of the county participated. Two Sam Houston State University history professors participated to learn more about the event so that a similar event can be held in Walker County for their university students.

Each participant received a souvenir “History Road Warrior” button. The three winning teams received trophies and \$25 gift cards courtesy of our sponsor: Gullo Ford, Gullo Toyota and Gullo Mazda automobile dealerships of Conroe. Members from the Heritage Museum provided additional information for the clues. The local "Courier" newspaper featured the event. We also received some assistance from the staff of the county judge and the county commissioner for the southern precinct. CHC appointees love providing this interactive history event and working with the CHC’s Youth Advisory Board to make the Rally a successful event.

### **Nueces CHC—County Historic Exhibits in Courthouse**

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*County Population: 361,221*      *CHC Appointee Count: 21*

Nueces CHC maintains a rather large wall display adjacent to the County Office/Archives. Exhibits feature material prepared by CHC appointees and borrowed from area history-related organizations. Some displays are designed to coincide with celebrations, and commemorations. For instance, World War I material was on display leading up to Armistice Day. Other times, an area museum will loan its display after its own exhibition has been completed. Judge Barbara Canales is amazed at how frequently our courthouse display cases are viewed by people passing through while handling county business. Heavy traffic days bring approximately 1,000 people per day past these exhibits, which is a wonderful opportunity to educate citizens about the history of Nueces County.

### **Tom Green CHC—Genealogy Fair**

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*County Population: 118,019*      *CHC Appointee Count: 8*

A Genealogy Fair was held at the Stephens Central Library in San Angelo, an event in which non-profit organizations, lineage societies, the Forts Trail sites, and local authors participate. In anticipation of the event, CHC appointees prepared displays, flyers, and brochures. An original partner in this highly successful event, the CHC is able to connect with approximately 200 attendees.

Each year, the Tom Green CHC displays focus on a different area of work or service that the Texas Historical Commission (THC) and CHCs provide. A recent display highlighted Archeology Month, providing THC brochures and posters. Because of their popularity, three of these remarkable posters were framed by the CHC to serve as door prizes for the event. CHC appointees used the opportunity to discuss local history and respond to inquiries regarding THC's archeology efforts. Appointees working the event were careful to explain the dangers (and illegality) of random digging for artifacts and vandalism to historic sites.

The educational materials provided by the THC staff made our booth one of the most attractive and informative. The display also included were a wide selection of flyers addressing other THC preservation-related topics: historic cemeteries, Historic Texas Cemetery designation process, Texas Historical Markers Program guidelines. CHC appointees made sure to provide information regarding local cemeteries, historical markers, etc. to encourage interest in Tom Green historic sites.

### **Wheeler CHC—Shamrock Route 66 International Festival**

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*County Population: 5,358*      *CHC Appointee Count: 7*

Shamrock was selected to host the International Route 66 Festival held July 2018. Shamrock's historic Tower Station and U-Drop Inn were the main attractions. The City of Shamrock reached out to the Wheeler CHC, local organizations, and surrounding towns to help create a Texas Panhandle Experience for Route 66 "Roadies" from all over the world. The event included the following activities, many of which were sponsored by the CHC: 2-night Ranch Rodeo and concert, a Chuck Wagon Coffee each morning, building mural tour, photo opportunities with Texas Longhorn cattle, arts and crafts show, and a living history activity telling the history of Wheeler County and the surrounding area.

Wheeler CHC's pre-event tasks included selling ads to be placed in the event program booklet and traveling the entire county to place event posters and hand out informational leaflets to businesses. After assembling swag bags for over 800 attendees, CHC appointees participated in the festival by hosting a Welcome Table at the arts and crafts show that provided county maps, handouts on historical marker locations, and recommendations for area sites to visit.

After a year of planning, this successful event drew participants from at least eight (8) different countries. Partners helping with this huge undertaking included Wheeler Economic Development Corporation/Chamber of Commerce, Wheeler Historical Museum, City of McLean (Gray County), TxDOT Travel, and Amarillo Convention and Visitors Bureau.

### **More about CHC performance on the following weblinks**

CHC Reporting Summaries and Project Descriptions

[www.thc.texas.gov/chc-reporting](http://www.thc.texas.gov/chc-reporting)

Distinguished Service Award Information

[www.thc.texas.gov/chc-awards](http://www.thc.texas.gov/chc-awards)

CHC Contributions to Texas' Statewide Preservation Plan

[www.thc.texas.gov/chcs-in-action](http://www.thc.texas.gov/chcs-in-action)



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