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Our Mission

To protect and preserve the state's historic and prehistoric resources for the use, education, enjoyment, and economic benefit of present and future generations.

CHC Impact
Groups Doing More with Less

By Amy Hammons, County Historical Commission Outreach Coordinator

The year 2011 has been filled with conversations about the value of preserving and promoting our heritage. Inevitably, this leads to questioning the value of preservationists' service—the time, energy, and money we invest in our efforts to save the real places of Texas.

It is difficult to express and qualify preservation's intangible impacts on a community. Consequently, County Historical Commissions (CHC) are undervalued and rarely provided the funding necessary to do the work for which they are tasked.

Typically, CHCs rise to these financial challenges and continue to serve by supplementing county budgets with personal funds and services. As a result, it becomes difficult to demonstrate the need for continued and additional support when our only response is to do more work with fewer resources.

Consider how this impacts our members and partners. Do we value our volunteers if we not only expect more of their time, but also expect them to incur more out-of-pocket expenses to fund projects?

Think of your requests to professionals for presentations, site visits, and conditions assessments, which require research, preparation, evaluation, and travel costs. If we continue to expect others to provide these services pro-bono or at a reduced rate, then we may undervalue their worth just as others often undervalue the significant contributions of CHCs.

There are no simple solutions to these quandaries, but the following tips will help to illustrate and convey the value of CHCs' work.

- Keep track of time, travel, and expenses and report the information to your county to document the extent of the investment in your appointed role. This also affirms the contribution of your volunteers.
Provide realistic budgets for your work. Instead of lowering your requested amount for fear of being turned down, provide a line-itemed estimate of the proposed work including any in-kind supplements that contribute to the entire cost. This shows ingenuity to fund quality projects in their entirety.
Make the most of any opportunity to work with partners and professionals. Ensure your appointees attentively listen at presentations and apply the information offered.

During this time of reduced budgets, opportunities with sizable impacts will be prioritized by your county, partners, and appointees. Make sure your CHC is the best investment of everyone's time and money. ★

Bob Brinkman, THC preservation professional, frequently prepares presentations for the public and CHCs on history-related topics.

