

HILL COUNTRY NEWS

Cedar Park receives environmental grants

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by Jenn Rains, Hill Country News

Cedar Park's efforts to promote ecological awareness and a clean environment have paid off. The city was awarded three grants for its environmental efforts from the Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG).

Cedar Park was one of 21 awardees to receive this year's grants and was the only one to receive three. Funding for the grants came from the Regional Solid Waste Grants Program of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

The grants, totaling \$21,844, will be used to help expand the city's Keen on Clean program, said Melanie Carr, Cedar Park communications director. "Funds from this grant will aid in the process to advance environmental learning and increase citizen responsibility that will help the city of Cedar Park to sustain and ensure a quality of life for citizens in this community for many years," she said.

Though the city has received grants from CAPCOG the past two years, this is the first time they have received any for this project, Carr said.

One grant, valued at \$9,165, will be used for training and the purchase of equipment (surveillance cameras) for the Cedar Park Code Enforcement Officers. The Kids Keen on Clean Program also benefited with a \$8,366 grant to expand the program.

"This year's grant will be used to develop a 'Green on the Go' Education Program," Carr said. A traveling trunk filled with educational materials about the environment will pass through Leander ISD schools to educate children about waste and environmental problems, and create awareness for recycling.

The third grant was awarded to the city for their Citywide Cleanup event which is scheduled for April 2009. Cedar Park won't have a household hazardous waste event next year since one was conducted on May 29, 2008.

Kelly Freeman, solid waste program coordinator for CAPCOG said Cedar Park had to apply for the grants. "They did real well and competed against some good projects."

She said all three grants were given for projects related to the city's Keen on Clean program, which served 1,328 cars at this year's event. "It sounds like a wonderful program," Freeman said. "It's generated a lot of participation, energy and awareness in the community through [the] programs."

Cedar Park was chosen for the grants based on a scoring system. CAPCOG received 22 applications this year and approved 21 applications for funding.

Other award recipients from the area include Travis County and the cities of Georgetown, Hutto and Austin.

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