



Bexar County Commissioners Court

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Texas Association of Counties recognizes Bexar County for innovation

Bexar County is one of nine Texas counties to be honored by the Texas Association of Counties (TAC) Leadership Foundation with a 2010 County Best Practice Award, presented to County Judge Nelson Wolff and Commissioners Court on Tuesday. The County's award is for innovation for the restoration of the Lady Justice fountain, which uses recycled condensate from the Courthouse's air conditioning system. This allows the fountain to run year-round regardless of drought and water restrictions.

"These tough economic times necessitate that counties be proactive and creative in providing services that improve their communities while, at the same time, saving taxpayer money," said Kaufman County Judge Wayne Gent, chair of the TAC Leadership Foundation. "These county programs are doing just that and we are proud to honor them for their achievements."

Unveiled almost two years ago, the fountain was originally purchased and installed on the Courthouse grounds in the late 1890s. During an expansion of the Courthouse in the mid 1920s, the fountain was moved to a San Antonio Water System pump station park on Market Street where it stayed until 1997 when it was vandalized and consequently moved to a storage facility for safe keeping. The fountain was returned to the Hidalgo Foundation in 2003 to eventually be restored.

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In 2006, the Hidalgo Foundation commissioned local artist Gilbert Barrera to recreate the sculpture and restore the base of the fountain. But with the knowledge that this region typically experiences extended periods of drought and water restrictions, County staff set out to find a way to run the fountain with recycled water so it could be enjoyed all year.

“Justice is on duty all the time, so it’s only fitting that her fountain should operate year-round,” Commissioner Tommy Adkisson said. “The best way to sustain our Lady Justice Fountain is to use recycled water from our air conditioning system to conserve this precious commodity. Bexar County will always look for the best way to conserve our natural resources.”

Judge Wolff also announced Tuesday that Bexar County recently received an Award of Merit from the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America for implementation of the new exterior façade lighting, which was installed with the renovation of the front plaza in 2008. In recognizing Bexar County, the Society cited the intent of the design, which was to create a nighttime identity as powerful and enduring as the Courthouse’s native stone structure. The design was created by The Lighting Practice working with Vitetta to reduce energy consumption, preserve the building’s historic fabric and creatively use light sources to enhance the building’s façade.

“Almost every day you can find couples taking wedding pictures in front of the fountain, or tourists stopping to get pictures of this grand Courthouse, so it’s apparent that the restoration of this plaza has been a hit,” Judge Wolff said. “The lighting of the façade not only makes this a safe place to enjoy at night, but it also helps highlight some of the architectural features you couldn’t really notice before.”