

For Immediate Release
January 31, 2018



Schools in Mason and Center Point Win *Rainwater Revival* Grants to Fund Water Conservation Projects

(Bee Cave, TX) Managers of the Rainwater Revival School Grant Program were happily overwhelmed with 6 grant applications from Hill Country schools this year. Though all projects had merit, the three judges made difficult choices and picked two deserving high schools in Mason and Center Point to receive a combined \$4,000 of grant funds.

The school grant program is run in association with the *Rainwater Revival + Hill Country Living Festival*, a daylong educational event that takes place every fall at a Hill Country venue. The festival brings together knowledgeable speakers, demonstrations, products, music, food and children's activities to help citizens and businesses learn how to harvest rainwater, protect the night skies, grow native plants, and steward our region's land and water resources.

At each year's festival, a silent auction of Hill Country-related goods and outdoor experiences generates funds for the school grant program. Since the school grant program began in 2010, 22 school projects for rainwater capture and water conserving projects have been funded.

"Water conservation projects give students opportunities to apply the math, science, and economics they are learning in class to real world, practical projects that directly benefit their fellow classmates and communities," said Katherine Romans, executive director of the Hill Country Alliance. "The future of water in the Hill Country will depend on conservation, and by partnering with students and schools we can instill that lesson early."

In Center Point, the High School Agriculture Science class will use their \$1000 to complete a project they began in 2015 to irrigate the community vegetable garden and a planned greenhouse that will serve as a living lab for the entire school district. According to Center Point agriculture science teacher Ryan Balsler, "This project was initially funded during the last drought, when the need for rainwater catchment was clear to everyone. When the rains returned, the funding dried up. This Rainwater Revival grant will help us finish the project so that it is in place when the next drought hits. Our students know that droughts are a part of life in the Hill Country and they are thrilled that our gardens and animals won't go without water when the next one hits."

At Mason High School, the Pioneers Youth Leadership class will put their \$3000 grant towards a 40,000 gallon rainwater catchment system that the students have developed to irrigate the school's practice

fields, reducing the demand on the community's potable water by an estimated 1 million gallons each year. "In addition to the water savings themselves," added Mason ISD Pioneers teacher Megan Bierschwale, "this project gives our students the opportunity to make a lasting impact on the stewardship of our environment, for the benefit of the whole community. The satisfaction of contribution and responsibility this imparts on the students will stick with them as they grow into adults."

The Rainwater Revival + Hill Country Living Festival is an annual celebration of collection, conservation and common sense. The free event is sponsored by the Hill Country Alliance, and the next event will be held on Saturday, October 20, 2018, at Dripping Springs Ranch Park. For more information: www.rainwaterrevival.com.

The Hill Country Alliance is a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to raise public awareness and build community support around the need to preserve the natural resources and heritage of the Central Texas Hill Country. Visit us at www.hillcountryalliance.org.

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Photo: The Mason High School Pioneers Youth Leadership class



Photo: Students from the Center Point High School Agriculture Science class, with HCA Program Manager Cliff Kaplan