



Spring 2007  
Volume 7, Issue 2

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Cyd V. Grimes, C.P.M.  
Purchasing Agent

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Pct. 2 Commissioner Sarah Eckhardt  
Pct. 3 Commissioner Gerald Daugherty  
Pct. 4 Commissioner Margaret Gómez

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261<sup>st</sup> District Ct. Judge Lora Livingston  
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# Travis County Purchasing Quarterly

## In the Spotlight Vera Cervantes

By Jerome T. Guerrero

Vera holds her head at a slightly lowered angle. She speaks softly with a sweet demeanor. "I'm so happy to be working here," she says while holding back tears. "I have to pinch myself because things are going so well."

A native Austinite, Vera is married to Alvino Cervantes, a Travis County Deputy in Central Booking. They have two children, James and Elizabeth, and seven grandchildren.

Vera began her career at Travis County in the Auditor's Office in November 1992, working as a receptionist. She joined the Purchasing Office in June 2004 as a Purchasing Clerk. When she started, she was very shy and reserved. Three years later Vera greets you as a more outgoing and vibrant member of the Purchasing team.

The eldest daughter of eight children with two older half-sisters, she said they, "had enough kids for a baseball team. We thought we had everything... we didn't know we were missing [anything] until later."



She has learned much in her time at Travis County. "I'm thankful for the experience I received in the Auditor's Office. I'm glad I was able to bring that experience here to Purchasing. All I want is to be a good asset wherever I work." I see and hear the honesty of her statement in her eyes and voice.

She is one of the first faces you will see  
*continued on page 4*

## HUB Program Begins Vendor Tracking System

By Jerome T. Guerrero

When the HUB Program began in 1994, there was only a part-time position which Marvin G. Brice held as a HUB Coordinator and Buyer. Now Marvin G. Brice, CPPB is an Assistant Purchasing Agent and the HUB Program is staffed with three full-time employees, a HUB Program Coordinator and two HUB Program Specialists.

Under the direction of Sylvia Lopez, HUB Program Coordinator, the program has begun implementing a new software that tracks prime contractor and subcontractor payments made by the prime contractor.

One of the biggest benefits of the system is



to efficiently track and confirm payments. Before, Ms. Lopez tracked payments on a PC-based spreadsheet. Now, several reports can be generated to report accurately how many dollars HUBs are receiving from county projects.

Initial training started with two vendors, Architectural Habitat of Austin Inc., and Jamail & Smith Construction. Both vendors were impressed with the ease of the system. This is a secure system that is both easy to learn and quick to use. The office will eventually use this system to track all projects and purchases issued by Travis County.

## Purchasing Liaison Spotlight

Gloria Hoffman

By Jerome T. Guerrero



Gloria Hoffman is a bright, cheerful, energetic woman who brightens the day of those around her. When she arrived for the interview, she hugged the purchasing staff, even the ones she met for the first time. She was prepared for the interview. Her file folder was ready with notes and figure sheets.

With six children of her own, she married Clyde

Hoffman, who had two daughters. Later, they took charge of her two grandchildren. I can see that this devoted Travis County employee is organized and detail-orientated. There can be no chaos when Gloria is "in the house." Bill Campbell, her supervisor, said of her, "If you could get a contract to clone her, I will find the budget for 10 copies."

She supervised the regional state schools (Travis, Bastrop), but later resigned due to the high travel. She managed the Bastrop Jail kitchen where she "got it under budget" within a year.

After a break to spend some time with her grandchildren, she applied for an opening at the commissary at

the Travis County Correction Complex (TCCC) near the end of 1997. She later moved to the food service area in 2003. She buys the food for the TCCC, Criminal Justice Center (CJC) and some food purchases for Gardner Betts Juvenile Justice Center.

She and Clyde try 'to stay young' by exercising regularly and learning new skills. They are learning conversational Spanish. Both are active with their church, working with several outreach programs and they love to travel in their recreational vehicle (RV) when they have the chance. Recently, she started Tai Chi lessons.

Gloria can be reached at [gloria.hoffman@co.travis.tx.us](mailto:gloria.hoffman@co.travis.tx.us)

# Saving Time and Money with BuyBoard

By Candy Graves  
Texas Association of Counties

Every county purchaser in Texas knows the drill. State law says that for any purchase of \$25,000 or more, they must advertise, solicit bids, review the bids, choose a vendor and then take their findings to commissioners court for approval. Average time to complete: three months.

That was then. This is now.

With a few online clicks of the mouse, it's possible to locate the item, check the prices, choose a vendor, create a purchase order online and then go on to another task. Average time to complete: three minutes. Average savings to taxpayers in reduced workload and lower purchase prices: priceless.

The difference is BuyBoard, a purchasing co-op that allows a purchaser to go online to buy those big bucks items without the whole tiresome and time-consuming bid process. That's because BuyBoard has already completed the process. They've sent out requests-for-bids, advertised in 10 major newspapers across the state, accepted sealed bids, taken the bids to the co-op board and awarded the contract.

"BuyBoard saves us a lot in administrative costs," said [Cyd V. Grimes, C.P.M., Travis County Purchasing Agent].

She also said the process is so fast that they are able to fill immediate needs even on the high dollar purchases, which would otherwise require the entire bid process. For example, when a contractor wasn't doing a satisfactory job on a soccer field, Grimes was able to go online to find another contractor who specialized in turf and could start im-

mediately to complete the project on time. "If you have an immediate need, it doesn't make sense to do it any other way," she said.

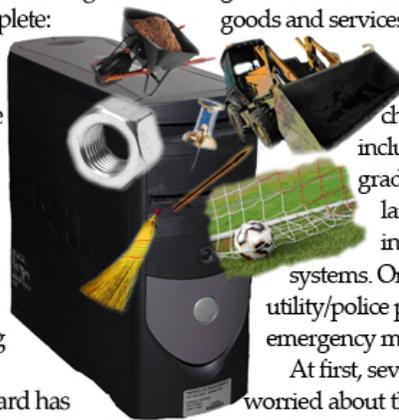
The money saved in employee time is huge, but BuyBoard also saves counties money in actual costs of the items they purchase. Because it acts like a pool by using the combined strength of many local government entities to award contracts, BuyBoard is able to provide goods and services at prices well below what one county could get by itself.

The most popular "big ticket" items purchased through BuyBoard are vehicles and trucks, including road and bridge equipment such as motor graders, wheel loaders, backhoes, utility tractors and large and specialty mowers. Other outdoor products include fertilizers, turf conditioners and irrigation systems. On the law enforcement side are police units, sport utility/police packages, mobile command equipment and emergency management/bioterrorist vehicles.

At first, several county purchasers expressed doubts. They worried about the legality of buying big items without the bid process. Would they be complying with state regulations? They worried about using a computer interface. How would this compare to seeing their vendors face-to-face? They worried about accountability. Who would ensure they received what they were promised?

Fortunately, those purchasers discovered that state regulations were being followed to the letter – that the 600+ vendors selling through BuyBoard had submitted their bids in response to specs the BuyBoard had sent out, and were awarded contracts after a thorough review by the co-op board.

*BuyBoard article continued on page 3*



# New Hardware Store Items Contract

By Jerome T. Guerrero

The kick-off on April 25<sup>th</sup> demonstrated the ease and efficiency of the new hardware store items contract. The two sessions, hosted by Grainger®, generated a lot of interest and fun. End-users are able to search the online catalog, with links to specialized catalogs for safety equipment, homeland security equipment, and green products. Users then place items into a 'shopping cart,' and generate a purchase order through H.T.E. The new system will also reduce accounting errors, especially when orders are properly cancelled but still invoiced by the vendor.

A mentor/protégé partnership between Grainger® and Burgoon will make it even better.

The Burgoon Company is a woman-owned business in partnership with Grainger®. Orders placed through the partnership are for

Grainger® delivery. Ordering through Burgoon will help boost HUB participation in the commodities goals. A specially made website for Travis County will make available the entire catalog of items offered by Grainger® and Burgoon. The system will be integrated into H-T-E so that the discounted price is reflected on the purchase order.

This is a contract that has been awarded by the State of Texas through the Texas Multiple Award System (TxMAS). Therefore, the items have been competitively bid and awarded.

In the end, the new system will save money, time and resources. If you have any questions, please contact the buyer in charge, Nancy Barchus, CPPB, Purchasing Agent Assistant II, at 854-9764 or e-mail at [nancy.barchus@co.travis.tx.us](mailto:nancy.barchus@co.travis.tx.us). ♦

## HUB Program Highlights

By Jerome T. Guerrero

This has been another busy quarter for the HUB staff.

The County is beginning a partnership with Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to adopt TxDOT Disadvantage Business Enterprise (DBE) guidelines required by 49 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) part 26. These guidelines will apply to the Frate Barker Road Improvements, Gillettland Creek Hike & Bike Trail and other projects that have received grants from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Community Block

Development Grant (CBDG). Staff is eagerly learning the myriad of federal laws and guidelines to apply to these projects. Formal training was provided by FHWA and TxDOT April 17 - 19, 2007.

Also, Cyd V. Grimes, C.P.M., and the HUB staff met with Commissioner Eckhardt to update her on the many accomplishments and awards earned by the Purchasing Office.

Commissioner Eckhardt expressed her support to include the HUB community in the opportunity to sell to the county. ♦

### BuyBoard continued from page 2

Purchasers also discovered that using BuyBoard didn't mean losing control over the terms of a purchase. Once a county selects a vendor, purchasing agents deal with that vendor directly and are able to negotiate with that vendor. They receive the invoice from the vendor and they send payment to the vendor; BuyBoard does not ask counties for money.

In addition, counties are able to continue working with the vendors with whom they are familiar or with whom they have an established relationship. "We also strongly encourage our members to have their preferred ven-

dors register with BuyBoard to give themselves the opportunity to bid on future projects," said Steve Fisher, BuyBoard's program manager.

Purchasers said they were also happy to discover that BuyBoard would be there to help resolve any issues they might have with vendors. While Fisher said he encourages BuyBoard's members and vendors to try to resolve issues themselves, he said BuyBoard is willing to step in if needed.

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## Quote of the Day

"Laughter gives us distance. It allows us to step back from an event, deal with it and then move on."

Bob Newhart,

US Comedian and actor

## Special Events Calendar

### UT Austin and UT Systems 14<sup>th</sup> Annual HUB Vendor Fair and Hard Hat Expo

May 2, 2007

Frank Erwin Center –  
UT Austin Campus  
Austin, TX

more information to follow  
Contact

Annette Smith

[asmith@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:asmith@austin.utexas.edu)

### Central Texas Business Procurement Conference

May 30, 2007

Texas State University -  
LBJ Student Center  
San Marcos, TX

Register on-line at [www.lcra.org](http://www.lcra.org)

Contact:

Texas State SBDC Main Office,  
[sbdc@txstate.edu](mailto:sbdc@txstate.edu), (512) 716-4800

### Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Vendor Open House

3505 Montopolis Blvd

June 14, 2007

3:00 - 6:30 PM

CONTACT

Al Beavers

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# e-Bid<sup>★</sup> Makes Food Purchases Easier for Del Valle & CJC

By Jerome T. Guerrero

There is always resistance to change. However, for Gloria Hoffman, change was an opportunity to expand herself and make purchasing food for the Travis County Correctional Complex (TCCC) easier and more efficient.

Before, she spent a lot of time on the phone describing packaging, weight, and grades of meat, produce and other food items in detail to each vendor. The Sheriff's Office approached the Purchasing Office about using RFPdepot to solicit bids for inmate food purchases. When the system was demonstrated to Gloria, she was, "like a little kid in a candy store." She was very excited at the ease and efficiency of the system.

Increased competition for food purchases increases savings. In the first quarter of usage, she

saved over \$9,000 in food costs.

Gloria has also been very satisfied with the customer support from RFPdepot.com. Any problems or questions with the site are promptly resolved. The ability of vendors to post questions makes a 'level' field for all the vendors. Additionally, this saves Gloria time by not having to repeat the same answer to several vendors. "I feel very honored that (the Purchasing Office) would even consider allowing me to use RFPdepot."

This past quarter over \$258,121.16 were saved county wide. This is based on budgeted dollars versus actual dollars spent.

Remember, RFPdepot.com is fast and easy to use! Encourage your vendors to register with Travis County through *RFPdepot.com*. ♦

## Right or Wrong

This little ode is for you  
For all the things you say and do  
That makes me feel I'm everything  
Even a harlequin that likes to sing  
It's knowing that you have my back  
While I'm running on life's track  
Little corrections now and then no doubt  
Cause don't we know who has the clout  
Yes I know rather right or wrong  
You're always here to set the tone

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Donald E. Rollack

## In the Spotlight, continued from page 1

when you enter the Purchasing Office. Quickly and quietly, she directs visitors to the conference room or to a purchaser's office. Sometimes, I will get a call from her saying, "I have a small business that wants to get more information..." The call is transferred and I will hear compliments about the sweet lady that answered the phone. She always keeps a smile on her face.

"I've been blessed by my work," she says as she has gained more confidence in herself and her work.

## Purchasing Office Recognizes Commissioner Gómez's Service

After serving on the Purchasing Board for over 11 years, Commissioner Margaret Gómez, Precinct 4, decided to step down from the board.

On March 20<sup>th</sup>, the Purchasing Office presented Commissioner Gómez with a plaque honoring her hard work and commitment with the Purchasing Board. She replaced Commissioner Barbara Carlson in January 1995 and since January 1998, has served as Chairperson. Cyd V. Grimes, C.P.M. said, "(Commissioner Gómez) and I have been together on this adventure over 10 years. We have been very successful. I appreciate all of (her) support."

The Purchasing Office appreciates all of the support that she has given us over the years. ♦

Vera cares deeply for her grandchildren as she is very family-oriented. She stays in contact with her siblings and mother, who still lives in the Austin area.

We are blessed by this sweet lady who quietly works with a thankful heart. ♦



## NOTEWORTHY...

### Welcome

Vania Ramaekers joined us on March 5, 2007, as a Purchasing Agent Assist. III, Professional Services procurement. She brings with her over 15 years of purchasing experience. A native of Brazil, she came to the USA in 1978 and became a citizen in 1981. She is excited to be part of a truly dynamic office.

### Congratulations

...to Jorge Talavera on his promotion to Purchasing Agent Assistant IV, Construction and A/E procurement. Join us in congratulating Jorge!

### Compliment!

Cyd V. Grimes, C.P.M. received a phone call from the State of Michigan telling her that Travis County has a model HUB Program as referred by the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing (NIGP).

## March is National Purchasing Month

In honor of recognizing March as National Purchasing Month, visitors to the March 27, 2007, Commissioners Court received a special treat of coffee and cookies. The purchasing function is a vital part of County government

Great job!

# Special Information

Travis County  
Purchasing Quarterly

## Supplement to the Spring 2007 Issue

# Park Rangers: A Day in the Life

By Don Chapman

Park Rangers are dedicated to the safety of park visitors and employees and to the protection of our county's natural and cultural resources, and are commissioned law enforcement officers and Emergency Medical Technicians. Although employed by the Travis County Transportation and Natural Resources Department, a Ranger's Peace Officer license and commission is held through the Travis County Sheriff's Office. Rangers are members of the Travis County Parks First Responder Organization, and respond under the direction of the Austin/Travis County EMS Medical Director.

Rangers provide many services and monitor activities in the park to ensure visitors are having an enjoyable and safe experience. While patrolling, Rangers make themselves available to assist the public in a variety of ways.

The most common interaction Rangers have with the public is simply providing answers to an array of questions, like:

"Where is the best fishing spot?"; "Can you help me set up this tent?"; "Where is the Oasis (restaurant)?"; etc. However, Rangers are trained and equipped to respond to a large variety of incidents. Whether it is locating a "missing parent" at a little league baseball game or responding to a cardiac arrest, Rangers are ready. Injuries occur because of steep cliffs and deep waters in our Lake Travis parks, and the high use of the sports fields in our Metro parks. Rangers respond, provide care, and coordinate with other arriving agencies. TNR operates a patrol boat on Lake Travis on weekends during the busy season. The boat is captained by a Ranger and crewed by a

Paramedic from Austin/Travis County EMS. The patrol boat has been instrumental in providing medical response and law enforcement on the lake as well as providing assistance to boaters.

Rangers respond to a variety of law enforcement calls inside parks and preserves and make arrests when necessary. Rangers are responsible for the safety of visitors and employees, and will intervene when a person's behavior or activity endangers the lives or safety of others, or if a person is violating State law. Due to the remote location of many of Travis County's parks, Rangers are often called upon to respond to law enforcement and medical incidents just outside of, or near, a park and to assist other officers and responders outside parks.



In addition to enforcing State laws, Rangers also educate the public on park rules. These rules and regulations are established to promote a safe, enjoyable experience that protects visitors while ensuring natural resources are protected in order to provide years of quality recreation.

Rangers enjoy many other duties and opportunities that promote parks and preserves. Rangers visit classrooms, guide tours, and work with volunteers to improve campsites, manage vegetation, and build trails. Rangers also plan and direct wildlife management, endangered species surveys, "kid" fishing and other pursuits. Some Rangers are certified to train other professionals in medical and law enforcement areas and offer classroom instruction to these groups, and some Rangers are certified to research, document, and protect archaeological sites on County lands.

While duties are many and varied, Rangers are people just like you, and they share the same desire to be outdoors. Rangers have chosen a career that enables them to work closely with people in a natural, outdoor environment, and they are professionals too, willing to respond to any type of call or emergency.

