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**Commissioner Todd Staples**  
**TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

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**COMMISSIONER STAPLES INTRODUCES NEW INITIATIVE TO PROMOTE  
RURAL TEXAS**

AUSTIN – Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples today announced the launch of the GO TEXAN Rural Community Program to promote rural Texas communities through reimbursable funding programs, tourism, education and networking initiatives.

“Our rural Texas communities are a tremendous source of pride and are vital to the health of our state’s economy,” Commissioner Staples said. “These communities have much to offer, and it is the mission of the GO TEXAN Rural Community Program to encourage Texas citizens, as well as visitors, to discover the bounty of our outlying cities and towns.”

The GO TEXAN Rural Community Program replaces Texas Yes!, an initiative launched by TDA in 2003 to promote the growth and prosperity of rural Texas. Better designed to capitalize on the unique culture and distinctive flavor of rural Texas, the new GO TEXAN Rural Community Program will help rural communities leverage marketing dollars to boost economic growth and prosperity.

Program participants are designated as certified or associate members. Certified membership is open to counties or cities with a population of less than 20,000, and whose city limits do not adjoin another city or group of cities’ boundaries with an aggregate population of 50,000 or more. Associate membership is available to chambers of commerce, economic development corporations, councils of government, convention and visitors bureaus, sole proprietors, etc. whose principal place of business is in Texas, with a rural location.

Benefits of program certified membership include reimbursable funding through the Texas Department of Agriculture’s Hometown STARS (Supporting Tourism and Rural Success) program and the Bootstrap Bucks program, which offer recipients up to \$10,000 and \$2,500, respectively. Other program benefits available to all members include promotion through GO TEXAN marketing campaigns, informative workshops and networking opportunities.

To learn more about the GO TEXAN Rural Community Program, visit [www.gotexan.org](http://www.gotexan.org) or contact Natalie Houghton, TDA’s Marketing Coordinator for Rural Texas Communities, at [natalie.houghton@tda.state.tx.us](mailto:natalie.houghton@tda.state.tx.us) or (512) 463-6490.

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