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HIDALGO COUNTY OPENS SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT CENTER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Edinburg, Texas – Marking the occasion that would have been John Austin Peña’s 27th birthday, the community of Hidalgo County gathered in his honor for the grand opening ceremony of the John Austin Peña Primary Care and Substance Abuse Treatment Facility. The public treatment facility, the first of its kind in Hidalgo County, will provide community-based outpatient substance abuse treatment and mental health services for children and adolescents.

Drug and alcohol use and dependency has long been a widespread epidemic among youth throughout the nation, affecting our Hidalgo County community as well. The latest “Monitoring the Future Survey” from National Institute on Drug Abuse in 2010 continues to raise concerns about increases in illicit, prescription, and over-the-counter drug use among teenagers. Our young residents, the future of our community, need the education, support, and resources necessary to combat dependency and abuse of harmful substances. The opening of this treatment facility demonstrates Hidalgo County’s commitment to improving the quality of life for our youth and their families.



The John Austin Peña Primary Care and Substance Abuse Treatment Facility

The facility was made possible through a coordinated effort between Hidalgo County, the State of Texas, local legislators, and various other entities that contributed funding, in-kind donations, legislative efforts, administrative services, and other forms of assistance throughout the project’s development.

PROJECT TIMELINE

- In 2007, the 80th Texas Legislative Session appropriated \$3 million for the construction of the substance abuse treatment facility.
- In 2008, Hidalgo County Precinct 4 identified a 6.31 acre tract of land to convey to the State of Texas, Department of State Health Services,

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County Judge

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Joe M. Flores
Commissioner, Precinct 3

Joseph Palacios
Commissioner, Precinct 4

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for the design and construction of the facility, and an operations plan was developed and submitted to the State of Texas.

- In 2009, approximately \$400,000 in funding was identified through the Texas Department of Emergency Management to reinforce and fortify the facility's infrastructure, allowing it to function and serve multiple purposes in the event of an emergency.
- In 2010, officials broke ground and construction on the facility began.
- In 2011, Hidalgo County Commissioners' Court named the facility after John Austin Peña.
- As per the agreement, the State of Texas will convey the property back to Hidalgo County upon completion of the facility.

The facility is named after the son of State Representative Aaron Peña, John Austin Peña, who passed away ten years ago on May 18, 2001 at the age of 16. In a resolution naming the center, Hidalgo County Commissioners' Court memorialized the legacy of John Austin's life, who continues to inspire the partnerships and collaborative efforts such as this to find community solutions to fight against drugs.

Speakers at the grand opening included State Senator Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa, County Judge Ramon Garcia, Pct. 4 Commissioner Joseph Palacios, and representatives from the Texas Department of State Health Services, the Texas Association of Addiction Professionals, and Serving Children and Adolescents in Need, Inc. (SCAN), the clinical service provider that will manage the facility. A tour of the facility was provided afterward for attendees.

"We congratulate everyone who worked so diligently to make this vision a reality," remarked County Judge Ramon Garcia. "All partners contributed to today's success to bring this much-needed treatment facility to Hidalgo County and give children and adolescents a second chance at life," Garcia continued.

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