



Hidalgo County Commissioners Court

Richard F. Cortez
County Judge

David L. Fuentes
Commissioner, Precinct 1

Eduardo "Eddie" Cantu
Commissioner, Precinct 2

Everardo "Ever" Villarreal
Commissioner, Precinct 3

Ellie Torres
Commissioner, Precinct 4

OFFICE OF COUNTY JUDGE RICHARD F. CORTEZ

Public Affairs Division

100 E. Cano St., 1st Floor
(956) 292-7026 P
(956) 292-7766 F
www.co.hidalgo.tx.us W
Public.Info@co.hidalgo.tx.us E

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, September 27, 2021

AmeriCorps/VISTA approves grant to Hidalgo County Judge Richard F. Cortez for the creation of a Youth Leadership Academy

EDINBURG – The national service program AmeriCorps/VISTA has awarded Hidalgo County Judge Richard F. Cortez's office a \$360,000 service grant to begin a Youth Leadership Academy in the county.

The partnership between the federal program that was founded by President John F. Kennedy to alleviate poverty and Hidalgo County was ratified by the Hidalgo County Commissioners Court during its regular Tuesday meeting last week. This is the first step in the creation of a leadership program aimed at teaching a new generation of policymakers in Hidalgo County the complexities of poverty. It will teach future leaders how government and non-governmental organizations can work together to mitigate poverty.

"Poverty is one our country's greatest public policy challenges and I vowed to address this issue during my time in office because it is a particular problem in Hidalgo County," Judge Cortez said. "I am excited about securing the help of AmeriCorps/VISTA, which has a track record of fighting poverty that goes back to 1965. The program they will help us create acknowledges that the challenges of poverty are not going away. They will help us begin the process of teaching a new generation of leadership in Hidalgo County about the complexities of this issue and what is available to help our low-income residents."

A dozen VISTA Members will eventually begin working in Hidalgo County to assess the priority needs of low-income residents in Hidalgo County, then begin working to develop a curriculum to teach high school and college-aged students about the public policy challenges of poverty. The Leadership Academy is expected to launch sometime in 2022.

Judge Cortez has already begun forming an advisory board called the Prosperity Task Force that will help develop the Leadership Academy curriculum as well as address other issues of poverty in Hidalgo County.

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Hidalgo County is home to one of the fastest growing regions in the nation. We provide health and justice to the over 800,000 residents of our county. We strive to be accessible and responsive to our citizens by providing excellent public service through the values of leadership, transparency, fairness, collaboration, respect and fiscal responsibility. Follow our social media feed at www.co.hidalgo.tx.us/followus