

County Eye for Wednesday, Sept. 28

Kerr County received notification earlier this month that a Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant has been awarded to fund the Kerr County Crime Victims' Rights Coordinator position and other program costs for the next two years. The grant pays 80% of the costs of the office and coordinator and the county furnishes the other 20%.

Because felony victims in Gillespie and Bandera counties are also served by the program, those counties contribute a small amount to the 20% match each year.

The victim services program began in October 2004 and funding for the program was secured under the first VOCA grant beginning in July 2005 and the county has been successful in applying for and receiving the grant each year, except for one year, since then. The one year that there was no grant the program was saved by the prosecutors and county funding the program.

The VOCA grant is part of a federal block grant provided to the governor's office and is secured through a screening process that begins with the Alamo Area Council of Government (AACOG)'s Criminal Justice division.

The program which is located in an office in the lower level of the Kerr County Courthouse annex provides services to victims of family violence, sexual assault, child abuse, elder abuse, aggravated assault, kidnapping, homicide, stalking and a variety of other violent crimes.

Hill Country Cares also receives funding from a VOCA grant that is an important part of their budget each year. Their primary focus is on family violence, sexual assault and child abuse. The two programs work closely together to provide services for those victims.

Work on the jail expansion has begun. Site preparation is well on the way and hopefully the building itself will begin to rise soon. Jail overcrowding continues to be a huge problem with near capacity a daily issue. A plan to temporarily relocate inmates to nearby county jails, if needed, has been approved by Commissioners' Court.

Sometime next year all of the prisoners will be relocated to Burnet County Jail to provide time for the renovation of the current jail and the connecting of the new building to the older law enforcement center building.

Vacating the jail will allow the construction to move faster and provide more safety to the community rather than trying to move the inmates around within the building to provide for the workers to do the renovations.

The Burnet County Jail is a large facility with almost 600 beds that was purchased by the county from a private contractor. They are currently housing inmates from Hays County while they complete a similar renovation and construction project like Kerr County will have.

Fall has arrived and lots of activities are planned around the community. The Kerr County Fair is set for the last weekend in October at the Hill Country Youth Event Center and a number of other family oriented events are on the schedule. Lots of school activities take place this time of year with football and volleyball dominating the schedule.

The national political campaign is winding down and voters will be going to the polls beginning with early voting on October 24 and ending on Election Day on November 8. Take time to learn about the candidates and the issues and be ready to cast your vote when the time comes to vote.

