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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Rainwater Revival awards grant to Utopia ISD

Austin, Texas (June 4, 2013) – Utopia ISD has been awarded a \$1,000 grant to support the school’s plan to implement a rainwater harvesting system and educate students about water conservation. The grant, one of three grants awarded to Hill Country Schools, was funded by the auction of professionally designed and painted rain barrels at last year’s Rainwater Revival, a free event that shares rain catchment techniques for all levels of interest.

“The innovation and enthusiasm that these schools, through their administrators and teachers, bring to their students is very gratifying,” said Karen Ford, a Hill Country Alliance board member and chair of the annual Rainwater Revival. “These students will learn the importance of water conservation and that conservation is easy, fun, and a very important thing to do.”

Utopia Independent School District will install a rainwater harvesting system and use it to introduce surface and groundwater issues to students across all grade levels. One hundred percent of the student body will be involved in some way in the conservation and catchment program – the agricultural mechanics class will install the catchment system, the environmental science class will consider water sustainability across the campus over time, the senior government class will study Texas ground and surface policy issues, elementary students will be charged with watering the plants and the high school art class will paint the rain barrels. UISD’s interest in developing a green campus began several years ago when it partnered with Keep Utopia Beautiful on a recycling program and last school year the Utopia Garden Club helped the school plant a keyhole garden. The school plans to use its campus as a demonstration project for the larger community.

Dripping Springs Middle School plans to create rainwater harvesting for its “keyhole garden” project that will be spearheaded by the school’s Garden Club. Through composting of cafeteria food, educational programs about finances involved in growing versus purchasing food and development and maintenance of the site, the school expects to involve all 1,100 students, including those in special education classes. Students are expected to learn life cycles, soil content and erosion, mathematics and life skills. The on-going project will be managed by future generations of middle school students in what administrators hope will become the new norm for the campus and its students – recycling, composting, collecting rainwater and gardening.

Hill Country Montessori School near Boerne will use the grant to install rainwater-harvesting systems for its native plant and vegetable gardens to help students understand the need to conserve water and use natural resources wisely. The grant will fund a 3,000-gallon rainwater storage tank that will be painted by students. Funds will also be used to adjust guttering so that children can more easily access the water for the campus’ current and future gardens and orchards. Teachers will integrate the water and conservation theme into all areas of study – math, science, music, languages, art and social studies.

Bandera High School received a special grant from the Hill Country Alliance, which sponsors the Rainwater Revival, for students in the drafting and building trades program to evaluate the school's extensive rainwater harvest system and to develop an information booklet on rainwater catchment, including system schematics, to share with other area schools. HCA applauded the school's desire to help other schools learn from its program and plan their own water catchment and conservation programs.

The Rainwater Revival is an annual celebration of collection, conservation and common sense designed to help individuals and businesses learn how to capture rainwater for in-home and outdoor irrigation. The free event is sponsored by the Hill Country Alliance and will be held Saturday, Nov. 2, 2013 at the Boerne Convention Center. For more information, visit www.rainwaterrevival.com.

The Hill Country Alliance is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to raise public awareness and build community support around the need to preserve the natural resources and heritage of the Central Texas Hill Country. To learn more about Hill Country Alliance initiatives, please visit www.hillcountryalliance.org.

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