

HIGHLIGHTING MODEL COMMUNITIES

HIDALGO MEDICAL SERVICES
LORDSBURG, NEW MEXICO

selected for its leadership, not only in
health care, but also in reviving the economic
health of the community

innovations

A PROJECT OF THE

frontier
education
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Hidalgo County Population

2000 – 5,932
 1990 – 5,958
 1980 – 6,049
 1970 – 4,734
 1960 – 4,961
 1950 – 5,095
 1940 – 4,821
 1930 – 5,023

Source: US Census Bureau

Hidalgo Medical Services (HMS), a comprehensive Community Health Center, was selected for the *Innovations* project for its leadership, not only in health care, but also its leadership in reviving the economic health of the community. This unique organization serves as a model for other communities.

integrating health care with the economic health of a community

Welcome to Hidalgo County, New Mexico where great things are happening as this community overcomes many barriers to build an exemplary health care system and revive its economy.

Hidalgo County is located in the southwestern boot heel of New Mexico, bordering Arizona and Mexico. The population of Hidalgo County is on a decline; the population reached its high point in 1980 at 6,049, was 5,932 in the 2000 Census but is predicted to further shrink to 5,600 in the 2005 census estimates. Lordsburg, the county seat, is a small railroad town of just over 3,300 people. Hidalgo is a very frontier county, with a population density of 1.7 persons per square mile.

Hidalgo County is far from everywhere. The airports closest to Lordsburg are in Tucson, Arizona, 152 miles to the west, and El Paso, Texas, 154 miles to the east. There is a reliance on goods and services provided in Arizona and Texas as well as Chihuahua and Sonora, two Mexican states which border Hidalgo County. This creates a unique situation for Hidalgo and its relationship to the state of New Mexico with the capitol in Santa Fe, 350 miles away.

A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Despite a century of boom and bust economics, the people of Hidalgo remain optimistic and enthusiastic about their ability to build a strong community. The strong sense of community and the hard work of many dedicated people have brought success to the county.

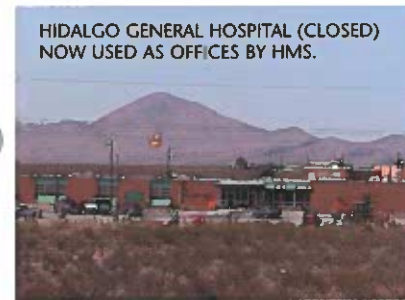
The majority of people living in Lordsburg have lived there all of their lives. They have a commitment to the well being of the area. According to City Clerk Irene Galven, Lordsburg is unique because "we stick together, we help each other in times of need." Community volunteers work to help a given cause, raising money for a family in need or to support an organization. There is a dedication to doing what is in the best interest of the community with the goal of benefiting everyone.

health care in Hidalgo County, New Mexico

THE EARLY YEARS – HIDALGO GENERAL HOSPITAL

Hidalgo County, like most frontier counties, has survived many trials through the years as it struggled to assure the availability of health services. The county has had an extremely difficult time keeping health professionals in the area because of its isolation, high levels of poverty, sparse population and inadequate funding.

In October 1960, the headline in the local paper, the *Lordsburg Liberal*, read "Hospital is a Necessity". The voters of the county were being encouraged to pass a bond issue to build a hospital. The bond issue was passed and two years later Hidalgo General Hospital



both local government and the community as they tried to bring much needed health services to the county.

Hidalgo Medical Services

The history of Hidalgo Medical Services is similar to the hospital, opening and closing through the years. HMS was first incorporated in 1983 and became a freestanding National Health Service Corps (NHSC) site operating out of a trailer beside the closed hospital. Charlie Alfero, current HMS CEO, was working for the State of New Mexico and helped with the initial incorporation of HMS. The NHSC physician later opened a private practice and then left town.

For the next nine and a half years, the community could not recruit a doctor.

HELP FROM THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO

In 1994, the Hidalgo County Manager began working to qualify for state primary care funds through the New Mexico Rural Primary Health Care Act (RPHCA). One of the first steps by the county was to form a partnership with the School of Medicine at the University of New Mexico (UNM), which included UNM medical residents, Residency Director Art Kaufman and once again, ten years later, Charlie Alfero.

Charlie Alfero is a key to the rest of this story. In 1994, Alfero was working to expand primary care sites through UNM's Rural Outreach Office. UNM was also helping Santa Rosa and Deming stabilize and staff their hospitals. The goal was to move them from the brink of closure. From the fall of 1994 until the summer of 1998 under a contract with UNM, Alfero commuted 600 miles every week to assist in developing HMS. Charlie Alfero has been the Executive Director of HMS since 1998.

On July 1, 1995, Hidalgo Medical Services was reopened with \$75,000 RPHCA funding from the state. The clinic was open for two days a week staffed by doctors from Silver City, 45 miles away. By the fall of 1996, HMS had a full-time family nurse practitioner and daily health services were once again available in Hidalgo County.

By August 1998, Hidalgo Medical Services had a full-time physician, and began providing part-time dental services for the first time ever in Hidalgo County.

Dentists flew from Albuquerque to Silver City every week, picked up the clinic pick-up truck, parked at the Silver City Airport, and drove to Lordsburg to see patients. The dentists would see patients during the day and spend nights in a trailer belonging to the clinic. They would then drive back to Silver City, park the truck at the airport, and fly back to Albuquerque.



It Takes a Strong Community Board to Build an Economy

Behind every strong non-profit is a good Board of Directors. The Board of HMS is diverse, represents key sectors - banking, law, county government - and has attracted retired professionals who share their skills and knowledge.

Executive Director Charlie Alfero, describes the Board as "highly evolved." Their service to the community brings the best qualities of "enlightened self-interest" and reflects an understanding that each person's success helps strengthen the whole community.



STAGECOACH Starring John Wayne

Regarded by many as the best Western ever made, STAGECOACH shot John Wayne to stardom.... With rumors in the air of a possible Apache attack, a motley group of travelers in a small New Mexico town board the Overland Stage bound for Lordsburg.

HELP FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Two large federal grants were received on the same day in the fall of 1997, Community Health Center funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Bureau of Primary Health Care and a Rural Health Outreach Grant from the Office of Rural Health Policy. Since that time, a number of other grants have led to the creation of a full service health clinic in a brand new 22,000 square foot building, which had its grand opening on May 28, 2003. The new clinic offers comprehensive medical and dental care, x-ray, laboratory, procedure room, family support, outreach and behavioral health services. In addition, the county public health office and other community services are co-located in the clinic.

HMS began as a single-site, troubled medical clinic in Lordsburg. HMS has now grown to a multi-site facility in two counties. Once HMS had re-established itself, it began to pull the rest of the community into improving health. It has developed the Hidalgo County Consortium, a group of community members who loosely guide the focus of health care in the area. The consortium has been active with HMS to bring diabetes and prenatal health education to the area.

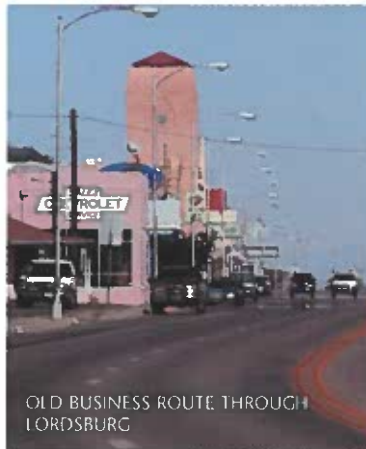
the economy of Hidalgo County

In many ways the recent history of Hidalgo County is the history of changing transportation in the United States. From a stagecoach route to a railroad town to a stop on Interstate 10, Lordsburg has grown and shrunk depending on the modes of transportation and the passage of people and goods through the town.

Ranching and farming are the largest surviving industries since the extensive shutdown of copper mines and smelters over the last three years. Mines and smelters were scattered throughout Hidalgo and neighboring counties, providing not only employment but also many additional services that large corporations support, such as health insurance, retirement plans, and medical services. Work in the mines and mills of southwestern New Mexico reflected the ups and downs of the copper mining industry as a whole. Some mines in the region are still operating, some are in the process of shutting down and others have already closed.

In April of 1982, Phelps Dodge, a prominent corporation in the copper industry, announced the shutdown of all its plants except for the smelter in Playas, 40 miles south of Lordsburg. The Playas smelter, and the community it supported, continued in operation for another seventeen years. After the smelter's closure, the people of Lordsburg and Hidalgo County realized that they needed to take action and focus on economic health to recover from the loss of this large employer.

Hidalgo County had never had a center of economic development, until recently. Like many rural counties, Hidalgo County relies heavily on grant-based support for funding projects since its economy is small and localized. Although the community has always taken an active approach to obtaining grants, since the smelter closure a more concerted effort is underway. Three agencies have achieved much success in receiving grants: the city of Lordsburg, Hidalgo County and Hidalgo Medical Services. Together these agencies intend to bring stable economic health to the county by following a strategic plan.



Hidalgo Area Development Corporation (HADECO)

FROM THE 1960'S TO THE FUTURE

A community effort in the mid-1960's created the Hidalgo Area Development Corporation (HADECO), an economic development agency. In 1966, HADECO filed as a not-for-profit New Mexico corporation, as "a necessary first step in developing the economic capability" of the area (*Lordsburg Liberal* 7/8/1966).

Once a Board of Directors was named, a membership drive began. The membership effort urged all county residents to become stockholders by purchasing one or more five-dollar shares. Shares in the corporation went to start an operating fund and entitled the holder to a voice and a vote in all shareholders meetings. The membership drive was heavily supported by the community, reaching 200 members after only two days and topping out at 332 members by the end of the drive. This grassroots support was essential for the corporation, which desired a true representation of the community by having as many individual shareholders as possible.



An early plan was to develop an industrial park using pooled funds to purchase a plot of land. Although the industrial park was never completed, the association was formed and the community had taken economic development into its own hands.

HADECO directors began work immediately, traveling to Tucson in January of 1967 to recruit a smelter to Lordsburg. Later that year, a door-to-door survey was conducted to determine the availability of labor in the area, so that the information would be available for prospective small industries. HADECO's largest success was constructing a nursing home in Lordsburg and acting as the governing board of the home until it was sold to a corporation focused on long-term care.

In the mid-1970's, the corporation went into 'hibernation.' HADECO still collected operating funds and awarded a Lordsburg high school graduate a college scholarship to the University of New Mexico every year, but it ceased to begin new projects.

The poor economic status of southwestern New Mexico has resulted in Hidalgo County receiving a number of grants. Community leaders have taken advantage of various opportunities for economic development.

1983: Hidalgo County was designated a site for emergency job creation under the Reagan Administration Emergency Jobs Act. This provided a variety of public works programs in the area.

Throughout the 1990's numerous US Department of Housing and Urban Development and Community Development Block Grants were awarded to the area for the improvement of existing housing, the development of new housing and general improvements of sidewalks and landscaping.

1994: Lordsburg applied to the Rural Community Empowerment Program and while the city was not chosen as either an Empowerment Zone or an Enterprise Community, it was designated a "Champion Community". This federal designation lasts for 10 years, providing the city with preference points when applying for federal grants, and assisting the city with developing a long-term comprehensive strategic plan that includes citizen participation and local problem solving.

1997: Mayor Clark Smith was chosen to receive the American Hometown Leadership Award by the National Center for Small Communities. Mayor Smith was recognized as a leader with a strong vision for his community and taking action to put that vision in place.

HADECO TODAY

After nearly thirty years of inactive status, HADECO has been revived, continuing its focus on economic health. This time it is the children and grandchildren of the original HADECO founders and members who are the leaders.

HADECO has become a committee of the successful, non-profit Hidalgo Medical Services, directed by a board of community members. Organizationally, it is a separate 501(c)(3), wholly owned

CERTIFICATE FROM GRASSROOTS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORT

by HMS. Working on a strategic economic plan with the city and county, HADECO is once again recruiting businesses to the area and assisting with the startup and expansion of small businesses owned and operated by community members. The organization is also helping the city and county with housing development, a regional plan and a border plan.

Community leaders today are even more active in requesting grants and have adopted a new cooperative approach to meet all of the needs of the county. Hidalgo County, the city of Lordsburg, HMS, and the Animas and Lordsburg school districts are working together so that grant requests are not duplicated. Rather than competing for funds, these entities have teamed up and are working together to "stay concerted in efforts, so there is more cohesiveness," explained County Manager Tommy Anderson. With each unit working toward a specific goal all basic necessities can be covered in a more efficient manner.

One aspect of the community that has proven essential is that everyone must be adaptable to change. If community members are not accepting and supportive of change, improvements are impossible. The commitment by both community leaders and the general population to maintaining the area as a stable place to live has proven to be of utmost importance in achieving an improved economic status.

economic health meets the clinic



HMS has played an important role in the regional plan for economic health. For the last eight years, HMS has worked hard not only to provide good medical care to the area, but it has also worked toward improving the economic health of the community.

The integration of health services and economic health in one organization provides interesting lessons for other frontier and rural communities. It began innocently enough; no one anticipated how quickly it would grow.

In 2000, Phelps Dodge announced the final closure of the copper smelter in the small town of Playas. At that time, Hidalgo County received \$75,000 from the US Department of Agriculture. The county contracted with economic development planners and Charlie Alfero, HMS Executive Director, was appointed to the county Planning Commission.

At one of the early meetings of this planning group, the facilitator told them that there is no public funding available to Hidalgo County, that it would need to pull itself up by its bootstraps and get the "rich" in the community to invest their money.

Two weeks later, Alfero attended a meeting of the National Association of Community Health Centers in Chicago. In a session with speakers from the Office of Community Services, Administration for Children and Families at the US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Alfero learned that four-year grants were available for economic development; Year 1 for planning and 2 – 4 years to implement loan/grant programs.

After returning from this health center conference, Alfero and HMS helped pull together an application to be submitted by the Hidalgo County Planning Commission. Six weeks later, this proposal was funded and HMS was on its way working to improve the economic health of the community. In Year 1, a business plan was developed. In Year 2, HMS was awarded \$350,000 from DHHS to support economic development and job creation with Janzen Construction/KC Panels. The grant will help expand the KC Panel operation in Animas, NM with the potential to create up to 35 new jobs building insulated panels for residential and commercial construction. The total population of Animas is only 200 people and 35 new jobs in a community of that size is very significant.

In addition to the various grants HMS has been awarded, HMS has assisted the economic development initiative in the area by hiring Laurel Turner, Economic Development Planner. County Manager Tommy Anderson says that Turner "is an added benefit," as she has been able to do studies of the area and has applied for grants. Laurel Turner has found that "economic development through health services makes sense."

The mission of HMS is to promote healthy lifestyles by providing health services. In general, healthy people are better workers, and productive workers are necessary for economic success. Not only does the use of health services to promote economic growth make sense, but also the use of HMS as a backbone to restart HADECO makes sense because of its success.

Asset-Based Community Development

"Strong communities are basically places where the capacities of local residents are identified, valued and used." (Kretzman and McKnight, 1997)

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FINANCIAL INSTITUTION (CDFI)

The newest economic health project of HMS is the proposed creation of a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), a program of the US Department of the Treasury. Only for-profit entities are eligible to be a CDFI. HMS has partnered with Western Bank (an independent, family-owned local bank) for this initiative. Through this program, the US Treasury will match dollar-for-dollar money loaned. The Hidalgo County CDFI has \$700,000 available for loans and a \$5 million revolving loan fund for local projects.

BUILDING ON EXISTING RESOURCES

Now in the process of economic recovery, Hidalgo County and the city of Lordsburg have made concerted efforts to take advantage of their location and make improvements to existing resources. Laurel Turner says that "Hidalgo County is in the best possible position for economic development, with its ideal location on Interstate 10 between Tucson and El Paso, a port to Mexico and a railroad." The county is in the process of opening its doors to tourism and capturing drivers along I-10.

As part of a regional Border Plan, Hidalgo County is working with the Municipality of Janos to open a port of entry for both a tourism route and commercial projects. Hidalgo County has worked on a regional proposal with adjacent Catron, Grant and Luna Counties to bring a better economic situation to the region because, more often than not, a shortcoming of one county impacts them all. While the county is working closely with its neighbors to create an improved situation for the entire area, the city of Lordsburg is focusing locally on its infrastructure improvements.

The city's main projects are directed toward making the city better equipped for future expansion. Currently, Lordsburg is rehabilitating the gas, sewer and water lines so that they are able to withstand additional pressure from existing and new infrastructure. The city is also working to preserve existing housing and bring in new housing developments. The lack of housing is a major concern because if there is no housing for new employees, businesses will be hesitant to establish themselves in the area. Isaura Andaluz, an economic development advisor to HMS, noted that if the quality of life in an area is not improved, then other aspects of the community, such as the economy, cannot be expected to fully develop. By rehabilitating the border crossing and the city's infrastructure, the county hopes to attract successful new industries and businesses to the area.

conclusion

Successful economic health requires a holistic approach; communities need to address the whole picture, have a plan and build on locally held assets. If the strongest local asset is a medical clinic, that is as good a place as any to begin to address the non-medical needs of the community. Hidalgo Medical Services was selected as a model because it sees no limit to how it can and should work to improve the lives of the people it serves.

In Lordsburg and Hidalgo County a few key leaders had a vision, which they have successfully passed on to the community, creating a plan for overall improvement. This vision focused on all aspects of community life, health care, housing, and small business development. In a small community, it is necessary to invest in what already exists and to make improvements to local assets. Investments such as these work to better the community as well as to circulate money in the local economy.

Hidalgo County has built upon Hidalgo Medical Services as an asset. With HMS, health care has improved with consistent caregivers and new facilities, and economic health is becoming a reality. Strong community support and involvement, along with a focus on reinforcing existing assets, have been the main elements of success for this area.

helpful resources

- **Laboratory for Community and Economic Development:** Community Development Toolbox. To create a development plan for your community, www.communitydevelopment.uiuc.edu.
- **Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD).** To learn how to identify the assets of your community, www.northwestern.edu/jpr/abcd.
- **USDA Regional Rural Development Centers:** North Central Region: www.ncrcrd.iastate.edu, Northeastern Region: www.cas.nercrd.psu.edu, Southern Region: www.srdc.msstate.edu, Western Region: www.extension.usu.edu/WRDC.
- **National Center for Small Communities:** Provides small town leaders with effective tools to govern, www.natat.org/ncsc.

A Hometown Bank is a Key Partner in Economic Health

Western Bank, located in Lordsburg, was founded in 1907 and is the second oldest bank in New Mexico. Western Bank has one location and is the kind of friendly, community bank that has become a rare and endangered species.

Unusual for a bank of its size, Western Bank is a member of the Federal Reserve Bank, Dallas District.

Mike Martin, President of Western Bank, is following in a family tradition. Mike's grandfather, a rancher at Red Rock, New Mexico, joined the Board of Western Bank in 1945.

frontier education center

NATIONAL CLEARINGHOUSE FOR FRONTIER COMMUNITIES

The only national organization dedicated to the smallest and most geographically isolated communities in the United States—the frontier.

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In partnership with the Health Resources and Services Administration OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH POLICY, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

YOU CAN NOMINATE A MODEL COMMUNITY

Please contact the Frontier Education Center by letter or email to nominate a model community for the *Innovations* project. Nominees should demonstrate leadership in both health care and the economic health of their community. All nominated communities will be listed on the Honor Roll posted at www.frontierus.org

Most Photographs provided by James Marrufo, HMS, and the Hidalgo County Chamber of Commerce.

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