

The Bandera PROPHET

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What is going on at The Silver Sage

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In an exciting development, The Silver Sage is embarking on a transformative journey towards establishing a new 60-acre campus. Reflecting this change and the organization's expanded scope of services, it will be partially rebranded as The Hill Country Resource Center. This new name more accurately represents its role as a comprehensive service provider, as it now serves a six-county region within the Texas Hill Country (Bandera, Medina, Uvalde, Real, Kerr, and Kendall), extending its services to all families, children, veterans, people with disabilities, and others in need.

Bandera County Committee on Aging Inc., DBA The Silver Sage, is a nonprofit organization that has been operating as Meals on Wheels, a Senior Center, Community Center, and Resource Center since its establishment in 1984. As a 501(c)3 organization, it holds a prestigious Platinum designation from GuideStar and Candid, affirming its commitment to transparency and excellence in the nonprofit sector. The Silver Sage places a strong emphasis on developing strategies that foster equitable access and positive outcomes in its programs and services. By proactively addressing systemic barriers, racial and ethnic disparities, and other biases that perpetuate food insecurity and economic instability, the organization strives to create a more inclusive and just society.

It's important to note that while the legal name of the organization (Bandera County Committee on Aging Inc.) is changing, we will still be known as The Silver Sage. Meals on Wheels and serving our senior citizens will always be the priority of The Silver Sage, and these services will continue without interruption during this transition. The transition to

the Hill Country Resource Center represents a rebranding effort that aligns more closely with the organization's overall vision, mission, objectives, and programming.

The Hill Country Resource Center (HCRC), located at 1167 FM 3240 (less than one mile from town), is an ambitious and innovative project currently in its design phase. Anticipated to be fully developed within the next five years, HCRC envisions itself as a pioneering sustainable agriculture community. But what exactly does that entail, and what will it look like when complete? Let's delve deeper into the multifaceted aspects of this groundbreaking endeavor.

At its core, HCRC is a comprehensive vision of sustainability and community development. The ranch will consist of 30,000 square feet of subterranean greenhouses, providing a thriving environment for year-round cultivation. These greenhouses will not only ensure a consistent supply of fresh produce but also serve as an educational platform for the community, fostering a deeper understanding of sustainable farming practices.

In addition to the greenhouses, HCRC will host a vibrant farmers market, offering a diverse range of locally grown, organic produce to residents and visitors alike. Complementing this, a teaching kitchen will provide a space for culinary education, promoting the use of sustainably sourced ingredients and empowering individuals to make healthier food choices.

The heart of HCRC extends to the land itself, with 12 acres dedicated to cropland and orchards. These areas will not only yield a bountiful harvest but also showcase sustainable agricultural techniques, inspiring others to embrace similar practices.

For nature enthusiasts, HCRC will feature an 8-acre wildlife conservation area, complete with birdwatching trails. This sanctuary will provide a haven for local wildlife, offering opportunities for observation and environmental education.

68 small, energy-efficient, sustainably built homes designed for senior citizens will form an integral part of the community. These homes will not only provide comfortable and energy-efficient living spaces but will

also promote a sense of belonging, community, and shared values among residents.

A nutrition center will be a focal point for promoting healthy eating habits within the community, offering educational resources and support for individuals seeking to improve their dietary choices.

Furthermore, HCRC will house a sustainable food center, emphasizing the importance of locally sourced, environmentally friendly food production and distribution. This center will play a pivotal role in promoting sustainable food systems within the region.

Recognizing the growing challenges of Alzheimer's and dementia, HCRC will include a nutrition-focused Alzheimer's and dementia daycare facility. This specialized facility will provide much-needed support for individuals and their families while also conducting research on nutrition-based approaches to these conditions.

In alignment with its commitment to sustainable practices, HCRC will establish a permaculture and soil regeneration learning facility. This resource will offer education and hands-on experience in permaculture principles and soil health, empowering individuals to become stewards of their environment.

At the heart of the project lies the "One Water" concept. Water, being the lifeblood of the region, is a paramount concern. Thirteen Texas rivers have their headwaters in the Hill Country, underscoring the vital importance of water conservation. The "One Water" approach embodies three key strategies: the use and reuse of water to expand water supplies, the collection, treatment, and management of water close to its source, and the pursuit of opportunities to minimize the overall water footprint. This comprehensive strategy ensures a sustainable water supply while protecting the economy, property values, and natural ecosystems.

HCRC is poised to become the first development of its kind to incorporate a Public Water System (PWS) primarily reliant on rainwater and recycled water. By harnessing every drop of rainwater and condensate and by reusing greywater, the project aims to eliminate the need for drilling new wells on the property. This groundbreaking concept has never been issued a permit by the Texas Commission on

Environmental Quality (TCEQ), making it an ambitious and pioneering endeavor. With close to one million gallons of rainwater storage planned, the HCRC believes that with the support of its engineering team, university partners, and organizations like the Hill Country Alliance, it can set a precedent for sustainable development in the Texas Hill Country.

To learn more about the "One Water" concept, please visit www.hillcountryalliance.org and Texas State University's Meadows Center for Water and the Environment at www.meadowscenter.txst.edu. Furthermore, the property's design incorporates conservative water management practices. All runoff and a portion of stormwater will be directed into groundwater recharge ponds, contributing to the preservation of local water resources.

To further enhance sustainability, HCRC is developing a state-of-the-art, zero discharge wastewater treatment plant. This forward-looking approach ensures that no sewage will be discharged into the land or streams. Instead, all blackwater will be treated and recycled for landscape irrigation, while solids will be transformed into biosolid compost, fostering soil regeneration. This environmentally conscious approach sets a new standard for wastewater management.

There has been thoughtful land clearing and cleaning around the property, removing excess underbrush, cedar, mesquite, and cactus. Efforts have been made to preserve the native oak trees wherever possible, emphasizing the commitment to environmental stewardship. While the master planning, engineering, and permitting phase of the project have proven to be more time-consuming and costly than initially anticipated, the vision for HCRC transcends conventional development. Rather than opting for a simple approach of drilling a well, clearing land, and constructing houses, HCRC is dedicated to establishing a community that serves as a resource hub for water conservation, permaculture, sustainable agriculture, and sustainable food systems. In summary, The Hill Country Resource Center, home of The Silver Sage, exemplifies a forward-thinking organization dedicated to serving its community. Its endeavors encompass a broad range of programs and

services designed to meet the diverse needs of individuals throughout the region, while "Empowering People, and Building Equitable Communities".

To learn more about the project, please join us for an afternoon of ranch tours on Saturday, Dec. 2, at 1167 FM 3240. For more details, see our Invitation and Ad for CommUnityFest.