



NEWS RELEASE

October 31, 2023

County's first grants administrator honored on day of retirement

Dennis Engelke grew grants portfolio by more than \$40 million in five years

Emotions were palpable during a special meeting of the Caldwell County Commissioners Court that was called to honor the achievements of Grants Administrator Dennis Engelke, who retired today.

The courtroom was packed with friends, family, county officials, state officials and State Rep. Stan Gerdes, who gathered to wish Engelke well on his retirement, which came exactly five years after the county hired him out of retirement as its first-ever grants administrator.

Taking over for Engelke is Amber Quinley, who previously worked for Bastrop County. She accepted the position in October and is set to start Nov. 1.

Since taking the helm, Engelke's experience with grant writing has propelled the county's grant portfolio from \$2 million to just over \$43 million.

Gerdes presented Engelke with a flag commemorating his years of service and commissioners issued a proclamation honoring his achievements and wishing him well on his fourth retirement.

With his wife of 48 years, Elizabeth, and grandchildren in the audience, Engelke was appreciative as he took the podium to thank all who had helped him along the way, detailing the achievements of which he was most proud.

Those achievements include securing grants that have paid for more than 100 repairs to bridges and low water crossings, over 50 units of body armor for deputies, and countless feral hogs eradicated, as well as numerous other things that have benefited the county.

"I want to thank the commissioners court for the honor and recognition they're giving me at the end of my career," Engelke said. "I enjoyed being part of the Caldwell County family and having coworkers who understand whom we work for – the taxpayers and residents of Caldwell County."

Engelke said he was looking forward to the next phase of his life, which includes spending time with his family in East Texas, where he plans to call home during his retirement.

“My favorite movie is the Wizard of Oz,” he said. “It was the first movie I ever saw in color when I was a kid, and I believe in the principle that there’s no place like home.”

He thanked County Judge Hoppy Haden and commissioners for giving him the opportunity to make a difference.

The judge was happy to reciprocate his appreciation.

“I had a speech planned, and I’m not going to be able to get through it,” Haden said. “I appreciate your friendship more than I can tell you, and that’s it for me.”

About Dennis Engelke

A graduate of Texas A&M University, Dennis Engelke’s career included stints at the Texas Electric Cooperatives - Statewide Association and CoServ, nestled near Denton, Texas. While with Texas Electric Cooperatives, an opportunity presented itself as Engelke and his wife sought funding for their son's end-of-the-year senior class party.

This endeavor marked the inception of his journey into the world of grant funding. The Engelkes worked together to secure funding for their son's senior class at Crockett High School. Elizabeth found a benevolent organization willing to provide \$200 in financial support for her son's party, contingent upon promoting the event as a non-alcoholic celebration. This grant was successfully funded.

This first and inaugural grant motivated Dennis, propelling him to venture into a wide spectrum of funding avenues. It’s a parable he shares during his grant writing courses and everyday interactions, where he has inspired and instructed individuals to seek financial support for their nonprofit and business initiatives.

Seeking to broaden his knowledge and skills further, Dennis enrolled in the Grantsmanship Training Center in Los Angeles, California, where he dedicated himself to learn and understand the ins and outs of the grant world.

This pivotal decision empowered him with the expertise and insights essential for successful grant writing. Upon retiring three times, his journey brought him to Caldwell County, as the county sought to hire a grant writer.

With a push from a local friend, Dennis found himself in October 2018 being interviewed for the Grants Administrator position for Caldwell County. Barely making it out the door, he was hired the day of his interview.

Throughout his five years with the county, Dennis was determined to make the Grants Department self-sustaining, asserting that every grant dollar the county received meant one less tax dollar for the county to collect.



Grants administrator Dennis Engelke was honored on Oct. 31 at a special meeting of the Caldwell County Commissioners Court. Pictured from left: Pct. 1 Commissioner B.J. Westmoreland, Pct. 2 Commissioner Rusty Horne, County Judge Hoppy Haden, Dennis Engelke, State Rep. Stan Gerdes, Pct.4 Commissioner Daryl Thomas and Pct. 3 Commissioner Ed Theriot.