

Another mountain to climb Big Bend Education Corporation to raise private money for public school/community library

led by the Rev. Judith Burgess, a circuit riding Episcopal priest, the Big Bend Education Corporation (BBEC), a non-profit organization which raised private money to build a public high school three years ago, has found a new mountain to climb. Their next challenge is to connect the last frontier to the information superhighway by building a high school/community library – again with money raised from the private sector.

"I don't know of any other school district that has had to it this way," said Terlingua Common School District superintendent Kathy Killingsworth. "It's because we don't fit anybody's formula or in any normal category that we don't get as much funding as other places."

The school district which borders Big Bend National Park doesn't have enough of a tax base to float a bond issue and for a variety of reasons, doesn't qualify for as much or in some cases any federal or state money that a lot of districts get.

"We're too poor to get state compensatory education money because we can't afford a cafeteria, and we can't get institutional facilities money because we can't afford bond indebtedness," said school

board member Tom Williams. "Catch 22."

The new library will be on the campus of Big Bend High School and have books, internet access, two-way interactive TV curriculum for high school

she conducts services, first at Lajitas, then at Terlingua Ranch. On alternate Sundays she conducts services at St. James church in Alpine and at St. Paul's in Marfa. Her territory is one of the biggest in the country,

have in this country, and America is a wealthy country. It'll be a shame if we can't build this library," she said.

Three years ago, a concentrated community fundraising effort driven by BBEC and aided by private donations and grant money resulted in construction of Big Bend High School. Now the community will attempt to find \$690,000 to add the new library.

Big Bend High School's graduating class of '98 had two students and was the smallest in the state. Next spring's graduating class, the first of the new century, will have 12 students.

"Six of those have applied to go to college," said Killingsworth. "And the other six hope to go to trade or technical school or into the armed services. Every student has a plan."

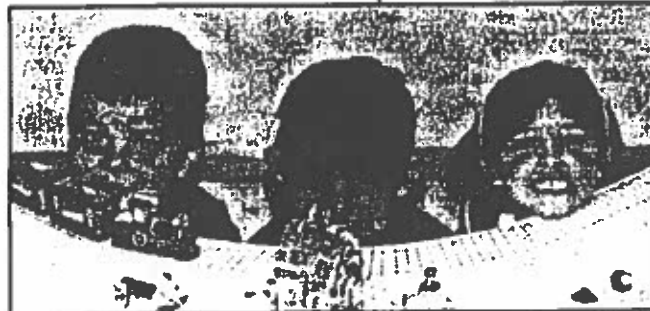
The eighth grade used to be the end of the line for a lot of Big Bend area students. Most of them never saw the romance of living on a frontier because after eighth grade they were faced with four years of riding a school bus 80 miles one way, 160 miles round trip, each day to Alpine to go to high school. It meant that a student that stuck it out for four years of high school would ride between a



Rev. Judith Burgess and riding companion Wild Thing.



Superintendent Kathy Killingsworth.



Class of 2012, L-R, Gerardo Amaro, Georgina Garcia, Chelsea Willard from Mrs. Gibson's first grade class.

and college courses, and periodicals and publications for research. Learning to do research is a priority for high school students planning to go college.

The Rev. Burgess is Vicar of the Big Bend Episcopal Mission, which is part of the Episcopal Diocese of the Rio Grande. Twice a month,

and a large part of her ministry in recent years has been serving as president of BBEC.

"In a sense it's a real injustice the amount of money that goes other places for other things, when local kids in the Big Bend don't have the opportunities other people

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