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**A Presbyterian Borderlands Ministry**

Puentes de Cristo has been serving in *Colonias* in Hidalgo County since the Spring of 2020. According to the Texas Attorney General's website, colonias are substandard housing developments often found along the Texas-Mexico border where residents lack basic services such as drinking water, sewage treatment, and paved roads¹. These areas are predominantly Latino, unincorporated, and impoverished².

We have worked hard at building relationships with the families in the Colonias and have become a trusted partner in serving their communities. We have met with the residents of Aurora Valley Colonia in Donna, and they have requested our help in revitalizing their community park to have a safe space for the women to have fellowship and for their children to play. They have also asked for assistance in building a community garden to deal with the issues of food insecurity and to provide a variety of healthy foods. Food insecurity is the lack of consistent access to enough food for an active and healthy life. One of the consequences of food insecurity is the lack of dietary variety, which means eating a limited range of foods that may not provide adequate nutrients for optimal health. Food insecurity is a major part of the tragedy along our border with Mexico.

With the grant received from Racial Equity & Women´s Intercultural Ministries, we have begun the work. A community garden is planned for this park and will be under the leadership of the women. Our work with the women at the Aurora Valley Colonia will include a gardening club and opportunities for community involvement, work, and educational programs to improve food access. As a Matthew 25 Organization we are called to serve Jesus by contributing to the well-being of the most vulnerable in all societies providing equal access to fresh foods.

(1) Colonias: A Public Health Crisis on the Texas-Mexico Border - Salud America. <https://salud-america.org/colonias-a-public-health-crisis-on-the-texas-mexico-border/> Accessed 4/18/2023.

(2) Major Health Problems Linked to Poverty - The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/10/us/10tthealth.html> Accessed 4/18/2023.