

Crop Production - Row crops & rice production continues to play a vital role in Fort Bend county with 13,679 acres of corn, 29,506 acres of grain sorghum, 30,951 acres of upland cotton, 2,438 acres of soybeans, and 5,060 acres of rice. AgriLife Extension developed and implemented the following programs to address the relevant issues in crop production: Fort Bend Row Crops Tour on July 2 (60 attended); Rice Tech Field Day on, August 21 (14 attended); and the Fall Row Crops Conf. on Nov. 19 (35 attended). On average a 74.1% increase in an understanding of effective insecticide use, life-cycle of southern rust of corn, causes of Aflatoxin on corn, proper variety selections, legalities of moving farm equipment on public highways, and Ag policies concerning the static of the Farm Bill—and how all of the above impacts the profitability margins of crop production.



Beef & Forage Production - Fort Bend is a diversified agricultural county with beef cattle as one of the leading Ag commodities with cotton production being first. Agricultural production continue to struggle with repercussion from the drought of 2011. To assist beef producers in making the best management decisions Texas AgriLife conducted three major events: 1) Upper Gulf Coast Ranch Expo was implemented with 91 attended; 2) Fort Bend County Beef & Forage Conference with 33 attended; and 3) Young Farmers of Texas tour of Twinwood US Inc. Akauchi cattle and pasture demonstrations with 47 attended.

of improper plant selection, cultural techniques, and pest control. In response, Texas AgriLife again hosted the MG program to help educate volunteers on sound horticultural practices, with the intent of creating good environmental stewards and outreach educators. The 26 individuals enrolled in the 50-hour Fall 2013 MG class joined more than 230 others to gain the knowledge and skills to help them serve as localized stewards in their neighborhoods and help AgriLife Extension expand capacity.

Water Conservation – For the past 15 years, Fort Bend has been ranked in the top 3% of the nation’s fastest growing counties and one of the ten largest counties in Texas. Our population is projected to top 1,000,000 by 2020 – and that is a lot of water! With water being a diminishing natural resource, it is extremely important that we teach water conservation and collection when and where possible. As a result, the Horticulture unit in Fort Bend continued to put forth major emphasis on water education in 2013. Activities included:

- Water Conservation Educational programs reached 10,722 contacts;
- 3-hour water conservation topic for our 2013 Master Gardener training class (26 contacts);
- TX WaterStar Conf. (48 contacts);
- Water Conservation workshops & lectures reached 312 clientele;
- Master Naturalist Prairie Heritage Day reached 400 attendees;
- EarthKind program reached 29 clientele.
- Rainwater harvesting system in the demo garden (718 visitors);
- Portable rain-water harvesting display for use at all related programs (1400 school students, 120 teacher/parent volunteers and the 96,500 fair attendees reached); and
- Teamed with N. FB Water Authority to demonstrate simply homemade systems

Contact Fort Bend County

Vincent J. Mannino, Co. Extension Dir. - Fort Bend
 Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
 Cooperative Extension Program of PVAMU
 1402 Band Rd. Suite 100, Rosenberg, TX 77471
 Phone: 281-342-3034, Fax: 281-633-7000,
<http://fortbend.agrilife.org>
[www.facebook.com/FortBendCounty Extension](http://www.facebook.com/FortBendCountyExtension)

Enhancing Our Horticulture

Backyard Basics – With consumers showing a greater interest in rural living, there is a growing statewide and national interest from consumers to learn more about where their food comes from and how it is prepared and preserved. In response AgriLife Extension in Fort Bend offered a series of 8 lectures relating to home food production, preservation and usage relating to topics such as Vegetable Production, Composting, Water Conservation, Food Dehydration and Freezing, Orchard Fruit Production, and Selecting Meats and Grilling. Each Saturday during the summer, 1/2-day trainings attracted a total of 110 participants that learned how to “farm” in their own back yards and how to preserve their bounties.

Master Gardener Training Program - Many homeowners in FBC are unaware of the consequences

Extension Education in Fort Bend County

Making a Difference
 2013

Fort Bend, founded in 1837, is one of the fastest growing and most diverse counties in the state and nation with a population increase of 10% since 2010, from 585,375 to 643,408. Currently, our population represents with 32.2% white, 26.7% Hispanic, 20.7% black, 19.6% Asian, and 0.8% other.

The Extension program in Fort Bend County is part of the statewide Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Cooperative Extension Program at Prairie View A&M University. It is linked with Texas county governments and the national Cooperative Extension System. Extension values and promotes citizen and community involvement, scientifically-based education, lifelong learning and volunteerism. We are pleased to provide you with this 2012 annual report of our educational activities in Fort Bend County.

Improving Our Health

One of the challenges we face in Texas and in Fort Bend County is educating our citizens, particularly those with limited resource to learn to make healthy food choices and sound food safety practices. Yes, its all about food! Our food choices affect our health and well being. In 2013, the following major educational activities were conducted by AgriLife Extension:

Dinner Tonight! - The goal for healthy cooking programs is to help families learn to how to cook quick, nutritious meals for their families in an attempt to achieve good health and cut down on diet related illnesses. Weekly video demonstrations are sent via e-mail to approximately 3500 people in Fort Bend County via distribution lists. Five Dinner Tonight Healthy Cooking Schools were conducted reaching 209 individuals. This number includes 95 persons that attended a Dinner Tonight Healthy Cooking School

coordinated by Fralonda Anderson, FCS-CEP. Evaluations indicate the events were highly successful in impacting family nutrition. Some of the outcomes noted were: 54% understood meal planning; 64% understood foods impact our health; 73% understood of how meal planning saves time & reduces stress; 65% understood of how to modify recipes to reduce calorie content; 68% understood of how to modify recipes to reduce sodium content; and 67% have understood how to modify recipes to reduce the fat content.

Better Living for Texans (BLT) - An estimated 1 in 14 households in Fort Bend lives in poverty resulting in diets that are low in fiber, vitamins A and E, folic acid, zinc, calcium, and iron; and higher in total fat, saturated fat, and sodium – ultimately leading to heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes. BLT lessons utilized included the Back to Basics series with 77 participants, and the 3-Easy Bites series with 55 participants. In addition, over 2450 Fort Bend citizens attended various health fairs to gain an awareness of BLT programming efforts. Those surveyed indicated: a >92% knowledge increase; >94% skill gain; and a savings of \$296 per person in medical costs.

Combating Obesity - In Texas, an estimated 66.6% of residents are at risk for being overweight or obese according to 2010 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). Excess weight has been identified as a risk factor for several chronic diseases including heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, and some forms of cancer. Highlights of Extension programs that combat obesity in 2013 were:

2013 Educational Outreach

Educational Programs Presented:
 1,212
Attendance at Educational Programs:
 515,414
Individual Contacts: 224,954
Volunteers Involved: 1,025
Volunteer hours: 54,935
valued at \$1,187,665.50

- **Step Up & Scale Down** - 24 of 55 participants completed the program, and recorded a loss of 185.6 pounds: an average of 7.7 pounds lost per participant. The recommended weight loss is 1–2 pounds/week or 8–16 pounds for the 8 week program.
- **Eat Smart Nutrition Presentations** - were presented at 6 elementary schools and 1 middle school in Fort Bend. Surveyed participants indicated 36.8% were active 4 days/week, 86.8% ate breakfast every morning, 42.3% read labels to help decide the healthiest fast-food options, and 66% were better able to stretch their food dollar by purchasing more fresh fruits & vegetables and less processed foods.
- **Walk Across Texas** – recognized as a “Best Practice Physical Activity” program by the TDSHS, this 8-week program helped people of all ages support one another to establish the habit of regular physical activity and to reduce obesity. Results indicated that the 184 participants could delay the onset of diabetes if they continue their physical activity routine. The Net Present Value for health care costs savings for females is estimated to \$1,734,384 and for males, \$371,857. The total savings of medical

Protecting Our Environment

Pesticide Education - Public concerns about the welfare of our environment have caused the need for training, licensing & re-certification opportunities for pesticide applicators. AgriLife Extension offered several training opportunities designed to help increase the knowledge and skills of applicators relating to pest control, laws & regulations, sprayer calibration and drift minimizations. Programs included feral hog workshops, vegetable conf. & general pesticide training courses. More than 600 applicators (private, commercial, non-comm. & structural) attended classes where CEUs were offered to help applicators stay informed and legal. Evaluation results indicated a 90% average gain in knowledge, 88% gain in skills and a 79% chance that new skills will be adopted.

Emergency Management - Texas is subject to numerous disasters, whether they are natural, accidental or intentional, with most being unpredictable. Emergency Management is an organized analysis, planning, decision making, and assignment of available resources to prepare for, mitigate, respond to and recover from the effects of all hazards. In Fort Bend, there were three major avenues of providing outreach information to our citizens: 1) 7th Annual Emergency Preparedness Workshop held in May with 159 participants; 2) 2013 Fort Bend County Fair educational exhibit; and 3) four one-shot programs to schools, child care providers’ pro-

grams and Schlumberger for a total of more than 4,300 total. Results from the face-to-face evaluations still indicate that 100% believe the information provided by AgriLife Extension is valuable, although most have never experienced a disaster with major impact to their lives and 86% will have an emergency kit on standby.

Wildlife Programs - Feral Hogs and other wildlife are a major problem in Fort Bend as they are throughout the state as our population increases. Efforts to assist our clientele included 3 major events: 1) *Feral Hog Management Wksp.* – the 83 attendees learned control strategies that would apply to 25,798 acres of farm & ranch land impacted by \$167,200 in damage/year; 2) *Nuisance Wildlife Pest Management* - with 48 in attendance. 3) *Upper Gulf Coast Wildlife Expo* with 35 attendees. Surveys indicated management practices would be adopted in controlling the nuisance wildlife in urban areas of Fort Bend, and that wildlife damage could be reduced by 85% after attending the event.



Strengthening Our Families

2013 Child Care Provider Conferences - Over 60% of children from birth through age six receive some form of child care on a regular basis from persons other than their parents that may not be well educated enough, nor caring & sensitive enough. It is essential for AgriLife Extension to help educate a workforce to provide the high quality child care that children need to develop physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively. In 2012, more than 295 providers that care for 2220+ children through 53 centers gained nearly 1670 clock hours by attending one of several full-day workshops to gain needed skills.



2013 Fathers Reading Every Day - Research shows that reading aloud to children on a frequent basis promotes early literacy among young children, and that strong relationships exist between children’s literacy skills, academic performance, and future income potential. AgriLife Extension and FB ISD utilized *Fathers Reading Every Day (FRED)* to reach more than 3,351 parents & children (a 150% increase over 2012). Results indicate more time is spent reading, improved vocabulary, higher grades and improved relationships. Comments included: “got me reading to my child everyday;” “increased the time I spent with my child;” “improved the quality of the time I spent with my child;” “helped me get to know my child better;” “helped me become more involved in my child’s education;” and “led to improvements in my child’s vocabulary.”

Developing Our Youth

4-H Veterinary Science Project/Certificate Program

This project deals with techniques and procedures involved in caring for animals. The program consists of 100 lessons and 50 activities with 500 hours of on the job training in which participants have five years to complete. Four new clubs were established and chartered in 2013 for the implementation of the Vet Science Certificate Program (Animaniacs; Blue Jay Vet Science Club; Katy Tigers Vet Science; and Paws for a Purpose), bringing our total to 8 vet-science project clubs, with each group in some phase of the 5-year curriculum.



ONE DAY 4-H was started in 2009 with a purpose of allowing Texas 4-H’ers to thank their communities, counties, and state for more than 100 years of support for 4-H and its members. Conducted by Texas 4-H, this event has become the largest organized day of community service by 4-H in the nation. Here in Fort Bend County for the fourth year in a row, One Day 4-H was held. This year One Day 4-H occurred on Saturday, October 12, 2013 with 34 youth and 13 adult leaders taking part. Participants worked for 4 hours to landscape and ultimately beautify the new Fort Bend County Justice Center located at 1422 Eugene Heimann Circle in Richmond, TX. Work duties included pulling weeds, adding mulch & soil, and planting groundcovers in a strip of frontage over 300 feet in length. Wow!



Winning With Nutrition - Texas is ranked 11th in the nation and has a child obesity rate of 20.4% according to the 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, conducted by the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. The report states that Texas youth continue to engage in behaviors that do not contribute to a healthy lifestyle and can have a negative impact on their athletic performance, such as alcohol, tobacco and drug use, and engaging in unhealthy dietary behaviors, such as lack of fruit, vegetable and dairy consumption. **Winning with Nutrition** engaged youth in learning the importance of proper nutrition and hydration for general health and well-being. The T.W. YMCA and the Coop. Extension Program of PVAMU teamed up to present this 10-week long camp that reached different

groups of campers each week. While being engaged in the program the curriculums consisted of lessons: Eating for Excellence; Hydration Station; Game Day Dining; Performance Robbers; and Fads & Facts. Through program efforts, 7 volunteers were trained and 450 youth were educated with 125 completing evaluations. As a result of evaluated participants, 85% of participants reported that they would do things differently because of what they learned.

2013 Take A Stand - Conflicts among youth and bullying have been increasing dramatically over the last 10 years. School districts across the state have been mandated by the Texas Legislature through two bills (House Bill 212 and 283) to adopt and implement a dating violence and a discipline management policy. Both bills require training for teachers/staff as well as training/curriculum for youth to address these issues. In response to this action, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Fort Bend developed and implemented educational programming for youth to address Bullying to satisfy the expectations of the Urban X 7 initiative. Lessons from the curriculum were taught at five locations around Fort Bend County. They included the following: Creek Side Church; YMCA – Missouri City; A Day to Take A Stand Camp; Wessendorff Middle School – Lamar CISD; and Burton Elementary – Fort Bend ISD. We had a total of 973 students go through the lessons that were taught. Fort Bend County had 827 respondents to the post survey; a total 85% of the participants concluded the program with completed evaluations. Cumulative results indicated 76.2% of the respondents had a change in behavior due to the program, with 80.6% giving positive feedback on the overall program.

Supporting Our Agriculture

2013 Agricultural Literacy - It is essential that AgriLife Extension take an active role in educating youth about the importance of agriculture in their daily lives. Fort Bend is unique in its demographic makeup with the north & east portions of the county being urban, while the south & west half remaining rural. AgriLife Extension developed and implemented educational programming for youth (as well as adults) to address the relevant issue of Ag Literacy. *AG’ivity Barn* was conducted during the FB County Fair and involved 26 collaborators to reach over 1463 elementary school students and 120 teachers & chaperones. In addition 60% of the 97,973 fair visitors attended *AG’ivity Barn*, and over 400 youth entered the coloring contest. A total of 21 exhibits were utilized to promote the ag industry in Fort Bend with 78 volunteers & 12 agencies assisting.