

Food Preservation - Home food preservation workshops are being offered again in Fort Bend County as a response to gardeners wanting a safe, affordable food supply of items that they themselves have preserved. Increased interest in backyard gardening, locally grown produce, and renewed interest in farmers' markets are the driving force behind the drive to learn more about home food preservation. In 2012, twenty-two adults attended workshops to learn water-bath and pressure canning. Participants learned to make jelly, butter pickles, green beans and salsa. In addition, seven 4-Hers took part in similar workshops



Enhancing Our Horticulture

The horticulture industry in Fort Bend County—made up of private & commercial landscapes, fruit & vegetable gardens, and municipal parks & nature trails—is expanding greatly to keep pace with our rapid growth and development. AgriLife Extension provided numerous educational opportunities for our clientele to enhance the industry as a whole. In 2012, our major programs included:

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 we had 211,646 single family housing units in 2012. Now that's a lot of water! And 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 2012. Activities included: a) most all of our educational programs contained topics involving water conservation in one form or another for 10,722 contacts; b) water conservation was a stand-alone 3-hour topic for our 2012 Master Gardener training class (28 contacts); c) we implemented the Home Water Conservation workshop (27 contacts) that focused on methods to conserve water in the landscape; d) we used the rainwater harvesting system in one area of the demonstration gardens as a teaching tool (696 visitors); e) we added 8 volunteers to our Master Gardeners'

speakers' bureau to focus just on water; f) we modified a portable rain-water harvesting display for use at all related programs (1018 school students, 120 teacher/parent volunteers and the 93,000 fair attendees reached); and g) we teamed with N. FB Water Authority to demonstrate simple homemade systems



Master Gardener Training Program - Many homeowners in FBC are unaware of the consequences 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 2012 MG class joined more than 200 others to gain the knowledge and skills to help them serve as localized stewards in their neighborhoods and help AgriLife Extension expand capacity.

General Outreach:

- 3,981 youth in 21 schools were reached by master volunteers or trained teachers by participating in gardening-related activities.
- \$3,000 in scholarships were offered to 4-H members by Fort Bend Master Gardeners.
- 6,756 adults attended monthly programs and workshops offered by Master Gardener volunteers.
- 93,776 people at the Fort Bend County Fair viewed exhibits relating to water-harvesting, vegetables, herbs, ornamentals, soils and beneficial insects.
- 8,118 residents received answers to their questions via office/site visits, phone/email, and the "Ask the Experts" website.

Contact Fort Bend County

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Extension Education in Fort Bend County

Making a Difference
2012

Fort Bend, founded in 1837, is one of the fastest growing counties in the state and nation with a population increase of 13% since 2010. Currently, our population stands at 606,953 with 36.1% white, 24.2% Hispanic, 21.5% black, 17.5% Asian, and 0.7% 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 resources to learn to make healthy food choices and sound food safety practices. Yes, it's all about food! Our food choices affect our health and well being. In 2012, the following major educational activities occurred:

Food Protection Management - Each year, an estimated 1 in 6 people become ill from the food they eat. While some people may view this as a mere case of "food poisoning," food-borne illness has serious health and economic consequences. AgriLife Extension, along with county & city health departments shared the responsibility of providing educational opportunities for food service providers. First, a 2-day certified food manager program (Food Safety! It's Our

Business) to prepare food service workers to sit for the state Certified Food Manager exam offered by ServSafe through the National Restaurant Assoc. where 55% were certified. Second, 98 people in Ft. Bend completed the FPM program, with change in knowledge/skills at 90%.

Better Living for Texans (BLT) - An estimated 1 in 15 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. All BLT lessons were taught to Fort Bend & Lamar Independent School Districts, Head Start, Parent Resource Center and Catholic Charities. The 20 lessons reached 252 participants. Participants indicated a >90% increase in knowledge, >95% skill gain and a saving of \$296 per person in medical costs.

2012 Food Safety - Food quality and safety involve purchasing, preparing, and storing food using procedures to prevent the spread of bacteria and reduce the risk of food borne illness. The Department of Health Disparities Research with MD Anderson Cancer Center invited the Cooperative Extension Program to participate in a food safety workshop at Windsor Village United Methodist Church. The workshop provided food handlers valuable information. Results indicated that 77% plan to take action or make changes to keep food safe, while 79% felt that they would save money as a result of this program by not having food go to waste as a result of improper handling.

2012 Educational Outreach

Educational Programs Presented:
799
Attendance at Educational Programs:
204,711
Individual Contacts: 96,036
Volunteers Involved: 1,134
76,408 volunteer hours
valued at \$1,664,930.30

Walk Across Texas – WAT, recognized as a “Best Practice Physical Activity” program by the TDSHS, is an 8-week program to help people of all ages support one another to establish the habit of regular physical activity. WAT is designed to increase regular fitness and reduce obesity – leading to a decrease in heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer, high blood pressure and depression. Thirty-one teams of eight people, school classes or individuals walk 830 miles across a map of Texas during the eight weeks. Results indicated that the 248 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 \$3,333,787, for males - \$479,044, and for lost wages is more than \$4,000,000.

Do Well, Be Well with Diabetes & Diabetes Education Awareness Prevention - AgriLife Extension offered topics to help the 8.8% of people with diabetes in Fort Bend learn the skills needed to manage their disease successfully to create a healthier Texas and reduce the \$12.5 billion spent annually relating to the effects of diabetes.

- The **DWBW** curriculum covered four nutrition and five self-care Educational programs, and included a number of workshops for a total of 220 participants, plus 11 individuals that took part in the **Cooking Well W/ Diabetes** – the follow-up class. Results indicate that participants were more aware of the health issues involving diabetes, how to manage diabetes, utilize medications and monitor glucose levels in their blood.
- Project **DEAP** through Cooperative Ext. Program offered two cycles of classes that consisted of six lessons. The participants indicated a great understanding of what an average blood-sugar level should be and how to check & monitor glucose levels, with 28 participants completing all sessions.

Protecting Our Environment

Pesticide Education - Public concerns about the welfare of our environment have caused the need for training, licensing and re-certification opportunities of 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. More than 600 applicators (private, commercial, non-commercial & 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) 6th Annual Emergency Preparedness Workshop held in May with 173 participants; 2) 2012 Fort Bend County Fair educational exhibit; and 3) four one-shot programs to schools, child care programs and Schlumberger for a total of more than 500. Results from 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.

Strengthening Our Families

2012 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, 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 400 providers that care for 3000+ children through 56 centers gained nearly 3000 clock hours by attending full-day workshops to gain needed skills.

2012 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, & future income potential. AgriLife Extension and FBISD Title I Schools initiated a program to encourage families (particularly dads) to become more involved in their students’ educational process - *Fathers Reading Every Day (FRED)*. More than 260 parents & children completed some aspect of *FRED* with 86 parents & children completing the entire program. Parents read an average of 31 books with their children and spent an average of more than 490 minutes of reading time together during the 4-week program. Results indicate more time spent reading, improved vocabulary, higher grades & improved relationships.

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. An informational meeting was held in August 2012 to inform interested youth and their parents about the program with 80 participants in attendance, and an additional information meeting was conducted in September for a Fort Bend County Home School group with 37 adults and kids in attendance. As a result, a total of three new groups have started the 5-



year curriculum, and two of the groups have chartered as vet science 4-H clubs. We now have five active vet science groups in the county, with more interest every day.

Seven Lakes Junior High 4-H Club

- The Seven Lakes Jr. High 4-H Club is a new concept for Fort Bend. The club is an in-school club that will meet during the day, once a month. Outside activities are planned to enhance what the students are doing during their meetings. Teachers will serve as managers, and the principal is backing the program that will focus on five key areas: horticulture; environment & wildlife; photography; robotics; and community service. An informational meeting was held on December 14, 2012 with 50 students and the two club managers in attendance. The club has been chartered, and members are joining in 4-H Connect. The first official meeting will be held on January 31, 2013.

“Keys to the Courthouse”- Educating youth about the role of county government in the daily lives of Texans prepares them to become knowledgeable constituents. In an effort to assist youth in social studies, the “Keys to the Courthouse” curriculum was introduced to local schools. The program featured five (5) lessons that contain age-appropriate (7th & 12th grade) classroom and research activities. Two Fort Bend ISD teachers were trained to facilitate and present the curriculum to 141 students. Results indicated that 83% could make better leadership decisions, 77% have a better appreciation for government, 58% wish to become involved in government, and 65% can now help educate others about the functions of county government.

4-H Sew & So Camp, Winter Workshop & Quilt Challenge

- This Camp was developed during the summer to provide an opportunity for youth to learn how to sew. The 5-day camp was offered once in Fort Bend County with 19 youth enrolled, and assisted by four volunteers and two Extension agents. In addition, 10 youth attended the Winter Workshop to create gifts for loved-ones, and three constructed a quilt that went to State 4-H Round Up held in Lubbock. Participants learned to use a sewing machine, a serger and an iron. Upon completion of the camp, participants “show-off” their creations at a culminating event – the fashion show. The attendees were given a survey and indicated favorite things about the camp which included designing the fashion storyboard, making the quilt, and tie dying silk scarves.



Supporting Our Agriculture

Although Fort Bend County is classified as an “Urban County” we are still 75% rural with nursery crops, cotton, sorghum, corn, hay, rice, cattle and horses adding nearly \$100 million to our economy. As a result, AgriLife Extension deems it necessary to focus on the following major programs:

2012 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 halves remain 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 1000 elementary school students and 120 teachers & chaperones. In addition 60% of the 93,000 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.