

# Extension Education — Making a Difference in Fort Bend County

## 2014 Executive Summary

TEXAS A&M  
**AGRI LIFE**  
EXTENSION



Cooperative Extension Program

### Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Faculty



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### Agriculture and Natural Resources

- **Backyard Basics** – These workshops, conducted throughout the year, support healthy living through home-based food production, preparation, and preservation. The programs were a great way for people to reconnect with nature and to save money by recycling or conserving resources, including the water they use for their gardens and landscapes. By growing their own vegetables, people not only get enjoyment from the healthful outdoor activity of gardening, they also know where their food came from and how it was produced. The calendar series included: Vegetable Production, Fruit Production, Culinary Herbs, Aquaponics, Poultry, Vermicomposting, Grilling, Freezing & Dehydration, Canning, and Jams & Jellies. A total of 172 participants (63% increase over 2013) that learned how to “farm” in their own back yards and how to preserve their bounties. Over 93% of participants indicated the valuable info will be utilized.
- **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 continues to struggle with repercussion from the drought of 2011—not so much related to drought, but restocking costs. 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 120 participants; 2) Commercial Heifer Clinic at the FBC Fair with 16 participants and 3) Commercial Heifer Sale at the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo with 34 participants.
- **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 2014. Activities included: 1) Water education programs reached 20,000+ contacts through mass media; 2) 3-hour water conservation topic for 2014 Master Gardener training class (34 contacts); 3) Regional Irrigators Symposium in partnership with Sugar Land educated 60 water professionals; 4) seven Home Water Conservation workshops held throughout Fort Bend reached 332; 5) two EarthKind programs reached 68 clientele; 6) Three commercial-related water events were held for 152 contacts; 7) portable rain-water harvesting display at the Fort Bend Co. fair (995 school students, 161 teacher/parent volunteers and the ~100,000 fair attendees reached); and 8) N. FB Water Authority demonstration unit (995 school students, 161 teacher/parent volunteers).
- **Crop Production** - Row crops & rice production continue to play a vital role in Fort Bend County with 13,500 acres of corn; 29,000 acres of grain sorghum; 31,000 acres of upland cotton; 2,400 acres of soybeans; and 4,800 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 June 19 (26 attended) and the Rice Tech Field Day on August 21 (19 attended). On average there was a 77.1% increase in an understanding of effective insecticide use, life-cycle of southern rust of corn, causes of Aflatoxin on corn, proper variety selections, and the legalities of moving farm equipment on public highways.



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- **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 integrated pest management, and drift minimizations. Programs included feral hog workshops, vegetable conf. & general pesticide training courses. Nearly 600 applicators (private, commercial, non-comm. & structural) attended classes where CEUs were offered to help applicators stay informed and legal. Evaluation results indicated a 94% average gain in knowledge, 89% gain in skills and an 83% chance that new skills will be adopted. Courses were offered through various subject matter efforts including cattle, crops, and horticulture programming efforts.
- **Farm Bill Training** (Agricultural Act of 2014) - held on 10-30-14 with 60 attending was hosted by AgriLife Extension with input from our local FSA. The new Farm Bill builds on historic economic gains in rural America over the past five years, while achieving meaningful reform and billions of dollars in savings for the taxpayer. Those in attendance indicated a 75% increase in understanding and a 63% possibility that this training will assist them in making positive decisions, while 78% indicated that they were still a bit confused.

## Family and Consumer Sciences

- **Dinner Tonight (DT)**! - The goal of DT is to help families learn to how to cook quick, nutritious meals and cut down on diet-related illnesses. Weekly video demonstrations are sent via e-mail blasts to approximately 3,500 people. In addition, two DT Healthy Cooking Schools were conducted, one during the Commercial Vegetable Conf. that reached 212 individuals and a second at the ABC Child Care Conf. for 221 contacts. Evaluations (380 returned) indicate the events were highly successful in impacting family nutrition, noting: 87% understood meal planning; 87% understood foods impact our health; 84% understood how meal planning saves time & reduces stress; 75% understood how to modify recipes to reduce calories; 77% understood how to modify recipes to reduce sodium; and 78% understood how to modify recipes to reduce the fat.
- **Combating Obesity** - In Texas, an estimated 66.6% of residents are at risk for being overweight or obese according to the 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 2014 were:

***Step Up & Scale Down*** - 32 of 33 participants completed the 12-week program and recorded a loss of 89.6 pounds: an average of 2.8 lbs/participant. The recommended weight loss was 1–2 lbs/week or 8–16 pounds for the 12-week program.

***Walk Across Texas*** – this 8-week program helped people of all ages support one another to establish the habit of regular physical activity & to reduce obesity. Results indicated that the 165 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 \$2,626,497 and for males, \$318,504. The total savings in lost wages is \$2,945,002.

- **Food Preservation** - With a growing number of requests for home food preservation information, Agents began offering workshops on canning, freezing, and drying. These workshops (Preserving the Harvest) often include hands-on experience so participants are actively engaged in the process and are able to take home with them a jar of preserved food. In 2014, thirty participants in Ft. Bend County participated in the workshop and completed pre- and post-surveys which allowed us to assess the “intent to adopt” targeted behaviors. Results indicated 83% will preserve fresh fruits and vegetables within a year; 67% indicated they will purchase the necessary tools needed; 13% owned pressure canners & 100% will have the pressure valves checked; 77% will only use recipes from a reliable source; and 67% will share information learned with others.

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- **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 37 participants and the 3-Easy Bites series with 124 participants. In addition, over 4,200 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.
- **2014 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 Extension to help educate a workforce to provide the high quality child care that children need to develop physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively. In 2014, at 3 workshops 298 providers that care for 4,387 children through 55 centers gained nearly 1,850 clock hours by attending one of the workshops to gain needed skills.

#### 4-H and Youth Development—Club Statistics

4-H Clubs in Fort Bend County - 25

4-H Club Members - 585

4-H Adult Leaders—110

Youth Leaders - 94

Curr. Enrichment Participants - 892

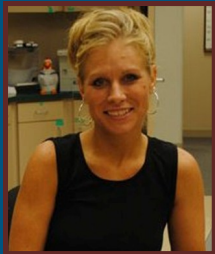
4-H Special Interest/Short Term - 94,417

- **2014 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, AgriLife Extension in Fort Bend developed and implemented a Bullying curriculum. Lessons from the curriculum were taught at Wessendorff Middle School – Lamar CISD to 423 students with 79.5% indicating they had a change in behavior due to the program, with 76.7% giving positive feedback on the overall program.
- **2014 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 remain rural. AgriLife Extension developed and implemented educational programming for youth (as well as adults) to address the relevant issue of Ag Literacy. *AG'tivity Barn* was conducted during the FB County Fair and involved 23 collaborators to reach over 990 elementary school students and 178 teachers & parent/chaperones; and, 573 youth entered the coloring contest. A total of 20 exhibits were utilized to promote the ag industry in Fort Bend with 83 volunteers & 11 agencies and organizations assisting. In addition, it was estimated that 60% of the 200,000 fair visitors attended *AG'tivity Barn* during the 10-day run.
- **Cooking Camps for Youth** - Obesity is a major risk factor for many chronic diseases and is increasing among all ages, particularly our youth. The prevalence of obesity among children aged 6 to 11 more than doubled in the past 20 years and tripled for adolescents aged 12 to 19. The most common **causes** are genetic factors, lack of physical activity, unhealthy eating patterns, or a combination of these factors. As a result, Agrilife Extension implemented two programs in 2014: 1) Pantry-to-Plate, a 3-day camp for 8-12 years of age with 15 participants; and 2) Teen Chef, a 2-day cooking school for 13-16 years of age with 10 participants (due to space constraints). Each group learned the nutritive value of healthy foods vs. the empty calories of others; food safety; and MyPlate. Results indicated an average increase in knowledge of MyPlate was 67%, 79.5% indicated that they would change eating habits, and 76.7% indicated that the camps were valuable and not just an entertainment venue.



Krystal J. Wilcox  
Program Aid - CEP

## Support Staff



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4H/Youth Development

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- **ONE DAY 4-H** started in 2009 to allow Texas 4-H'ers to thank their communities, counties, and state for more than 100 years of support. Conducted by Texas 4-H, this event has become the largest organized day of community service by 4-H in the nation. In Fort Bend County for the fifth year *One Day 4-H* was held. Our County Council held a Highway Cleanup and a Food Drive. We had help from Fort Bend Road and Bridges and the Needville Police Department with the safety measures that were needed. The event started at 4pm and ended when the sun started to go down around 7:00 pm . We were able to clean about 5 miles of road with one group on each side. The event was a great success, and a lot of cool items were found during the clean-up.
- **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. Three clubs were established and chartered in 2012, four in 2013 and another in 2014 bringing our total number of Vet Science project clubs to eight with a total active membership of over 100. Members within each club are in some phase of the 5-year curriculum. Club names include: Animaniacs; Blue Jay Vet Science; Katy Tigers Vet Science; Paws for a Purpose; Animal Doctors; Ready-Set-Vet; 4-H Home-School Vet Assistants; and Hearts to Tails.

## Community Economic Development

- **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) 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Emergency Preparedness Workshop held in May with 68 participants; 2) 2014 Fort Bend County Fair educational exhibit with 60,000 viewers & 1654 acquiring "After a Storm" publications; and 3) 2,100 "After A Storm" were shared with Fort Bend Office of Emergency Management as part of their programming efforts. Results from the face-to-face evaluations still indicate that 100% believe the information provided by AgriLife Extension is valuable in protecting life and property and 84% will have an emergency kit on standby.

## Total Educational Contacts

Total Educational Programs Conducted - 736	Total Participants - 389,927
Contact Hours via Ed. Programs - 168,911	Master Volunteers - 392
Extension Education Club Members - 36	Total of Volunteers - 1,119
Total Volunteers Hours - 53,484	Volunteer Value - \$1,251,526
Office Contacts - 2,633	Site Visits - 2,877
Phone Calls - 5,609	Number of Newsletters - 31
Newsletter/Mail/E-Mail Contacts - 65,911	Web Contacts - 50,287
Radio/Television Segments - 34	eXtension - <i>Ask the Experts</i> - 339

## Contact Information

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