

Making a Difference in Fort Bend County...

2nd Quarter Newsletter

April - June 2020

Special Topics for Spring 2020

- Two New Fort Bend Extension Employees
- COVID-19 Guidelines & Practices
- Texas Extension Education Association of FBC
- Safe Handling of Fresh Produce
- FBC Education Center & Shooting Range now open
- COVID-19 Pandemic & USDA Service Centers
- Snapshot of Upcoming Events
- Glimpse of Fort Bend
- Contact Information

April - June 2020 TOTAL CONTACTS

223 Educational Sessions
3,624 Attendees
(63.3% Adults, 36.7% Youth)
(42.4% Male, 57.5% Female)
1,703 Social Media Posts
38,170 Soc. Media Followers
28 Newsletter Editions
32,818 Newsletter Contacts
343 Volunteers Assisted
497 Volunteer Hours
395 Edu. Resources Used

Note: Our quarterly face-to-face contact numbers are down, but our social media and electronic newsletter contacts are up due to the results of social distancing during this pandemic.

Message from the Co. Extension Director

How quickly things change! During the last quarter of my report, the market was up, unemployment down, profit abilities and salaries were rising and Extension Agents had a great lineup of face-to-face programs. Now unemployment is thru the roof, profits are drying up for some businesses, COVID-19 won't seem to go away, and riots & looting issues are everywhere. Instead of standard programming, our agents are using technology like we never dreamed. We're delivering medical supplies and serving as contact tracers. What else? We here at Extension are getting some of the same calls that we have always gotten, plus a few that we never anticipated. Here are some of the common questions:

1. **Can I get COVID-19 from my pets or other animals?** Fact: Unlikely! There is no reason at this time to think that any animals, including pets, in the U.S. might be a source of infection with this new coronavirus that causes COVID-19. To date, CDC has not received any reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19 in the U.S. Pets have other types of coronaviruses that can make them sick, like canine and feline coronaviruses. These other coronaviruses cannot infect people and are not related to the current COVID-19 outbreak. However, since animals can spread other diseases to people, it's always a good idea to practice healthy habits around pets and other animals, such as washing your hands and maintaining good hygiene.
2. **Should I avoid contact with pets or other animals if I'm sick with COVID-19?** Fact: You should restrict contact with pets and other animals while you are sick with COVID-19 just like you would around other people. Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, it is still recommended that people sick with COVID-19 limit contact with animals until more information is known about the new coronavirus. When possible, have another member of your household care for your animals while you are sick. If you are sick with COVID-19, avoid contact with your pet, including petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked, and sharing food. If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, wash your hands before and after you interact with pets.
3. **Can I get COVID-19 from imported animals or animal products?** Fact: Unlikely! CDC does not have any evidence to suggest that imported animals or animal products pose a risk for spreading COVID-19 in the U.S. This is a rapidly evolving situation, and information will be updated as it becomes available. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the USDA, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service play distinct but complementary roles in regulating the importation of live animals and animal products into the United States. CDC regulates animals and animal products that pose a threat to human health, USDA regulates animals and animal products that pose a threat to agriculture; and FWS regulates importation of endangered species and wildlife that can harm the health and welfare of humans, the interests of agriculture, horticulture or forestry, and the welfare and survival of wildlife resources.

For more information on the many benefits of pet ownership, as well as staying safe and healthy around pets, livestock and wildlife, visit Centers for Disease Control & Prevention's **Healthy Pets, Healthy People** website at: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/index.html>.



New Employees Hired in Fort Bend County

Help us in welcoming two new employees to our Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service office in Fort Bend County.

First, we have Mr. Phillip Thielemann, our County Extension Agent for Agriculture/Natural Resources. In this role Mr. Thielemann will oversee row crop production as well as assist farmers & ranchers with animal, pasture and soil/water related questions and issues. Phillip has a wealth of experience—he holds a Bachelor's of Science degree in Ag Education from Texas A&M, is a life-long cattle raiser & row-crop farmer, and a veteran Ag-Science teacher with over 30 years of experience. He began his professional career in insurance sales with Texas Farm Bureau Insurance, then taught ag science at Lamar High School for 11 years before transferring to Foster High School in Richmond where he remained for over 19 years. At both schools, he served as an FFA Chapter Advisor, implemented FFA & 4-H Progress Shows, and taught leadership skills including public speaking, parliamentary procedures and Quality Counts. Mr. Thielemann's teaching opportunities included An Introduction to Agriculture, Animal Science, Wildlife Sciences, Ag Mechanics, Horticulture and Soil Sciences as well as implementing work-based learning opportunities of value for future employment.



Second, we have Mrs. Danielle McLure hired on May 18 as our new 4-H & Youth Development Program Coordinator. Danielle has a Bachelor's of Science degree in Animal Science. She was previously employed in Fort Bend County as a clerk in the District Attorney's Office, then as a Legal Assistant with a law firm in Huntsville, TX. Danielle then accepted a position with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension in Brazoria Co. as their 4-H & Youth Development Administrative Assistant. In Brazoria County she was responsible for maintaining membership status for over 550 4-H members and over 20 volunteer adult club managers. She maintained the 4-H budget and all duties included such as coordinating various fundraisers. Danielle was responsible for marketing & promoting 4-H/YD events, maintained social media & website outlets, and coordinated Ag Awareness events that involved all program areas of AgriLife in Brazoria County. She helped organized AgriLife Gulf Coast Classic, and helped coordinate progress shows for both 4-H and FFA.

COVID-19 Guidelines and Practices

As we return to work, knowing the preventive steps we can all take to slow the spread of COVID-19 is very important for everyone's health and well being. Your actions can make a difference at work, in the community, and at home.

Here at AgriLife Extension in Fort Bend we are open for business, but doors remain locked and entrance is permitted after a quick wellness check and sign-in. We are maintaining at least 6 feet distance between agents and/or clientele or masks are used. We are hand-washing, hand-sanitizing and using disinfectant wipes & sprays. We are carefully planning for a limited number of face-to-face meetings while following both rules and guidelines of Fort Bend County and TX A&M AgriLife Extension Service. We are arranging tables and chairs to support safe distancing. And, most importantly we've learned our future outreach educational events will consist of both face-to-face meetings and the use of technology such as Zoom, Teams, Skype, etc. (as a second choice).



To assist with the real focus of staying safe the following videos were created in Fort Bend for use by all County employees as well as the clientele we serve:

- **Guidelines & Practices**— <https://vimeo.com/user114908770/review/416040725/5964447a57>
- **Hand Washing**— <https://vimeo.com/user114908770/review/416040860/e58a7811b9>
- **Using Face Masks**— <https://vimeo.com/user114908770/review/416041187/1bca49a5cd>
- **Cleaning Workstation**— <https://vimeo.com/user114908770/review/416041104/bce73c5221>
- **Social Distancing**— <https://vimeo.com/user114908770/review/416041023/1dc3002598>

Texas Extension Education Association of Fort Bend (TEEA)

One of our longest serving volunteer groups serving Fort Bend County is TEEA (formally known as Extension Homemakers) which is still active today with 38 members.

TEEA HISTORY—The Texas Home Demonstration Association (THDA) was organized in August 1925 by 399 women attending a farmer's short course at Texas A&M University. The primary purpose for the organization was to establish a scholarship for a deserving 4-H girl. In 1969, the organization name was changed to the Texas Extension Homemakers Association (TEHA). In 1993, the organization name was changed to the Texas Association for Family & Community Education (TAFCE). The name was changed due to changing times. In 2000, the Texas Organization dissolved from National (NAFCE) and formed the Texas Extension Education Association (TEEA). The primary purpose of TEEA is to (1) study homemaking and to develop and put into practice the best methods involved in successful homemaking; (2) to offer people an opportunity for self-improvement; and (3) to advance community interest and life.



TEEA MISSION: To work with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension to strengthen & enrich families through educational programs, leadership development & community service.

TEEA VISION: To become the most effective volunteer organization for supporting families through lifelong learning opportunities. We will strive through education to improve family and community life for all families, reaching across ethnic age, cultural lines and including those with disabilities.

TEEA PRAYER: *“Grant to us, dear Lord, Thy Divine guidance in our plans today, that our accomplishments of tomorrow may be pleasing to Thee. Amen.”*

Educational Duties include: Supporting the Creative Arts exhibits at the Fort Bend County Fair; supporting our Fort Bend County Family & Community Health agents with sewing, cooking and food processing; supporting local non-profit groups with hand-sewn items; supporting graduating seniors with scholarships; and other worthy causes.

Safe Handling of Fresh Produce

Fruits and vegetables are an important part of a healthy diet, but harmful bacteria that may be in the soil or water where produce grows may come in contact with the fruits and vegetables and contaminate them. Or, fresh produce may become contaminated after it is harvested, such as during preparation or storage. Eating contaminated produce (or fruit and vegetable juices made from contaminated produce) can lead to food-borne illness which can cause serious — and sometimes fatal — infections. However, it's easy to help protect yourself and your family from illness by following these safe handling tips! 1) Purchase produce that is not bruised or damaged. 2) When selecting fresh cut produce (melons, mixed salad greens, etc.) choose only those items that are refrigerated or surrounded by ice. 3) Bag fresh fruits & veggies separately from meat, poultry and seafood products. 4) Refrigerate at 40° F or below ASAP. 5) Cut away any damaged or bruised areas on fresh fruits and vegetables before preparing. 6) Scrub firm produce before peeling or cutting. Enjoy healthy eating!



Fort Bend Co. Education Center/Range Now Open with Guidelines

The FBC Education Center & Shooting Range opened for the first time in 3 months on 6/8/2020 with the implementation of strict guidelines as a result of COVID-19. Guidelines include:

- Continue social distancing of 6 feet apart.
- Masks must be worn inside County building.
- Total building occupancy is limited to 25 individuals w/one parent/guardian per shooting sports participant.
- 8 Members in the actual range at a time, using 2 empty lanes between each member per 6 ft social distancing rule.
- Each occupant is required to fill out the individual information form upon entering the facility, and place them in the box provided.
- Food & snacks are highly discouraged at this time, however personal drinks are allowed—no sharing!

COVID-19 Pandemic & USDA Service Centers

Since the implementation of the 2014 Farm Bill, FSA has invested an average of \$1 billion each year into the stability of our state's agricultural system. And, with Texas playing a vital role in United States agriculture, we lead the nation in the number of farms, and produce the most cotton, wool, and mohair in America. The local FSA office is conveniently located in the same building as the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Because of the recent COVID-19 pandemic, FSA has put into effect nationwide guidelines to reduce the spread of the coronavirus to ensure the safety of its employees and farm families. As a result, access to FSA County Offices may be limited. Before visiting a USDA Service Center, contact your office at (281)232-6898, ext. 2 to confirm an in-person or phone appointment. Agricultural producers should visit farmers.gov/coronavirus for the latest information on available services and the latest status of service centers impacted by these locally-specific health measures.

Important news: Coronavirus Food Assistance Program

Are you a farmer or rancher whose operation has been directly impacted by the coronavirus pandemic? The Coronavirus Food Assistance Program will provide direct relief to producers who faced price declines and additional marketing costs due to COVID-19. Beginning May 26, FSA began accepting applications for CFAP. To find the latest information on CFAP, including forms and the contact information for your local Service Center, visit <https://www.farmers.gov/cfap>.



Snap-Shot of Upcoming Events:

NOTE: Regarding any and all face-to-face meetings hosted by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, safe-distancing guidelines must be followed at all times until further notice. Click or cut & paste the link below to view a list of upcoming programs as we attempt to achieve normal programming efforts.

Please visit us online at fortbend.agrilife.org; or call 281-342-3034 or email us at fort-bend-tx@tamu.edu.



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<http://fortbend.agrilife.org>

www.facebook.com/FortBendCountyExtension

A Glimpse of Fort Bend Co.

In 2018, the population of FBC had reached 764,828 of which 41.4% are college educated, 88.5% are high-school graduates, and the average household income is \$118,558.

For over 20 years, we have been in the top 20 counties in the U.S. for economic excellence and population growth; and that is by design and not by accident. "Among the largest counties (>250,000 or more in 2015), Fort Bend was the fastest growing as we climbed 4.3% between 2014 and 2015 to 741,237".

Excellent schools, affordable housing, planned communities, and extensive recreational facilities have attracted families with impressive demographic profiles. These actions result in a local employment base that provides companies with a diverse mix of professional, technical, skilled, and unskilled labor with the highest educational levels in the region.

For more information, you may visit: www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Individuals with disabilities who require an auxiliary aid, service or accommodation in order to participate in any Extension activities are encouraged to contact the Fort Bend County Extension Office at 281-342-3034 for assistance five working days prior to activity.

The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating.