

# Making a Difference

## 2019-2020 Healthy Kleberg-Kenedy County Youth Nutrition Education In-Depth Plan Summary Zelina Zavala, EA-Health and Frank Escobedo, CEA-Agriculture & Natural Resources, Kleberg-Kenedy County

### RELEVANCE

Excessive weight and inactivity are consistently linked with increased incidence of chronic diseases. With 17.3% of Texas children ages 10 – 17 being obese and Texas ranks 12<sup>th</sup> as the state with the highest obesity rate in the same age category. Additionally, 16.9% of Texas high school students are obese, resulting in Texas ranking 11<sup>th</sup> as the state with the highest high school student obesity rates.<sup>1</sup>

| Health Factors & Outcomes <sup>2</sup>   | Kleberg County | Kenedy County | Texas | U.S.             |
|--|----------------|---------------|-------|------------------|
| <b>Children in poverty:</b> percent of children under 18 in poverty  | 33%            | 20%           | 22%   | 14% <sup>4</sup> |
| <b>Children eligible for free or reduced-price lunch</b>   | 68%            | 77%           | 59%   | -                |
| <b>Food Environment Index:</b> A scale from 0 (worst) to 10 (best), based on the % of the population that is low income and does not live close to a grocery store and the % of the population that did not have access to a reliable source of food in the past year. | 6.8            | 3.5           | 6.0   | -                |

### RESPONSE

As a response, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service has developed health programs that can address these issues using science based, evidence-based education. The Healthy South Texas Coalition, program specific Task Force groups, and community adult and youth volunteers, have identified, implemented, and evaluated the following youth nutrition education and physical activity programs in Kleberg-Kenedy Counties.

| Youth Nutrition Programs  | Program Location & participants            | Program Date(s) | # of Participants |
|---|--|-----------------|-------------------|
| <b>Learn, Grow, Eat &amp; GO! Gardening Program:</b> LGEG grows good kids through an interdisciplinary program combining academic achievement, gardening, nutrient-dense food experiences, physical activity, and school & family engagement.   | Harrel Elementary – 4 <sup>th</sup> grade  | Sept – Oct 2019 | 61                |
|   | Perez Elementary – 4 <sup>th</sup> grade   | Sept – Oct 2019 | 68                |
|   | Jubilee Elementary – 4 <sup>th</sup> grade | Sept – Oct 2019 | 30                |
|   | Ricardo Middle – 7 <sup>th</sup> grade     | Sept – Oct 2019 | 69                |
|   | Harrel Elementary – 4 <sup>th</sup> grade  | Feb - Mar 2020  | 47                |
|   | Jubilee Middle – 5 <sup>th</sup> grade     | Feb - Mar 2020  | 40                |
|   | Sarita Elementary – 4 <sup>th</sup> grade  | Feb -Mar 2020   | 8                 |
|   | Riviera Elementary – 4 <sup>th</sup> grade | Feb - Mar 2020  | 24                |
|   | Harvey Elementary – 4 <sup>th</sup> grade  | Feb - Mar 2020  | 31                |
|   | Jubilee – 4 <sup>th</sup> grade            | Feb - Mar 2020  | 41                |
| <b>Dinner Tonight, Jr.:</b> Dinner Tonight Jr. curriculum uses experiential learning to teach healthy eating and active play, targeting behaviors research shows to be most important for preventing childhood obesity and chronic disease. Topics include food preparation, preparing safe meals, family mealtime, food labels, grains, healthy snacks, low calorie drinks, power up breakfast and physical education. | Ricardo Middle – 7 <sup>th</sup> grade     | Dec 2019        | 25                |
| <b>TOTAL YOUTH WHO RECEIVED NUTRITION EDUCATION</b>   |  |                 | <b>444</b>        |

*The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife.*

**Collaboration:** Multiple collaborative efforts were made that fostered relevant programs and community needs. Collaborating organizations include local school districts, Kleberg County, and Texas A&M University-Kingsville.

## RESULTS

**Learn, Grow, Eat & GO!: An evaluation instrument (pre and post approach) was used to measure behavior change and adoption of practice.** Due to COVID-19, schools/students who participated in LGE in 2020 were unable to complete the program. The following data reflects results from school who completed LGE in fall 2019, only.

- 73.0% indicated that participation in LGE has made them want to come to school.
  - **(Increase of +24.5% from 2018-19 programs)**
- 58.0% indicated that gardening has helped them become a better math and science student.
  - **(Increase of +8.7% from 2018-19 programs)**
- 48.6% indicated they taught someone else how to make better food choices through participation in LGE.
- As a result of a successful fall garden program, several schools participated in our “garden show” where Master Gardener volunteers judged student entries.



**Dinner Tonight, Jr.: An evaluation instrument (post approach) was used to measure overall impact.** After completing the Learn, Grow, Eat & GO! Program, Ricardo ISD continued receiving education and moving toward earning Healthy School Recognition. The following is the result of the event and measures overall impact:

- 85.7% indicated they plan to practice proper handwashing always or often.
- 78.6% indicated they plan to keep food preparation area sanitary always or often.
- 75.0% indicated they plan to eat more fruits and vegetables AND select healthier foods for snacks always or often.
- 64.3% indicated they plan to read nutrition facts labels always or often.
- 57.1% indicated they plan to try the recipes demonstrated today always or often.



**Healthy South Texas School Recognition:** Schools committed to supporting and encouraging students, staff, and parents with healthy lifestyles through participation in Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service programs. The following campuses have earned the Healthy South Texas School Recognition in 2019-2020.

- Ricardo Middle of Ricardo ISD, Kleberg County.
- Ricardo Elementary of Ricardo ISD, Kleberg County.
- Harvey Elementary of Kingsville ISD, Kleberg County.

**Future plans:** The 2020-2021 *Healthy Kleberg-Kenedy Youth Nutrition* plan includes Learn, Grow, Eat and GO! Garden program to educate and youth on gardening, nutrient-dense foods, physical activity, and school & family engagement.

Program delivery continues to change due to COVID-19 and Agency guidelines and will include virtual and hybrid delivery methods learning to reach youth who are learning both face-to-face and remotely.

<sup>1</sup>Trust for America’s Health and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2020). *The State of Childhood Obesity: Helping All Children Grow Up Healthy.* <https://stateofchildhoodobesity.org> (accessed November 2020).

<sup>2</sup>Source: <https://nccd.cdc.gov/DHDSAtlas/Reports.aspx> and [countyhealthrankings.org](https://countyhealthrankings.org)

| VALUE  |  |
|--|--|
| Obesity Prevention and Reduction   |  |
|  | The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service engages children and adults in programs that teach them how to eat nutritious foods and engage in regular physical activity to promote health and reduce their risk for obesity. The Texas public benefits through a healthier population, reduced health care costs, and increased productivity. |

**EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE**  
*Providing Solutions*