



Extension Education in Nueces County

Making a Difference

2017

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and its partners have long been dedicated to educating Texans. Extension education evolved nationwide under the 1914 federal Smith-Lever Act, which sought to extend university knowledge and agricultural research findings directly to the people. Ever since, Extension programs have addressed the emerging issues of the day, reaching diverse rural and urban populations.

In Texas, all 254 counties are served by a well-organized network of professional Extension educators and some 100,000 trained volunteers. Extension expertise and educational outreach pertain to the food and fiber industry, natural resources, family and consumer sciences, nutrition and health, and community economic development. Among

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those served are hundreds of thousands of young people who benefit annually from Extension's 4-H and youth development programs.

Texans turn to Extension education for solutions. Extension agents and specialists respond not only with answers, but also with resources and services that result in significant returns on the public's investment. Extension programs are custom-designed for each region of the state, with residents providing input and help with program delivery. Here are just a few highlights of Extension impacts on this county and its people.

Nueces County – Summary of 2017 Educational Contact

Founded..... 1846
 County Seat.....Corpus Christi
 Area Total..... 376 sq mi (145/km²)
 Population, 2017.....340,233
 Density......872/sq mi (100/km²)

2017 Contact Summary

Total Education Programs Conducted..10,3331
 Total Participants 232,139
 Curriculum Enrichment Participants 70,632
 Contact hours via educational program 79,559
 4-H Members 756
 4-H Leaders118
 4-H Clubs 27

Economic impact benefitting

 Clientele \$34,760,077.04
 Office Contacts/Site Visits. 6,260
 Newsletter/Phone/Mail/E-Mail Contacts 12,636
 Web Contacts11,523
 Radio and Television Programs 17
 News Releases40
 Cash and In-kind donations by
 A&M AgriLife, Nueces County supporters
 and collaborators \$2,032,468.28

Making a Difference

Row Crop Management

Jason P. Ott, County Extension Agent –Ag/NR
Nueces County
2017

Relevance: In Nueces County approximately a 362,586 acres are used as cropland according to the 2012 Census of Agriculture. Rain-fed crop production accounts for the majority of agricultural production in the county, with cotton and grain sorghum being the major crops of concern. As costs of production continue to increase and growers are currently faced with depressed commodity prices, there is a need to evaluate new emerging technologies to determine their feasibility in local farming systems. In order for growers to maintain profitability, thus protecting long-term sustainability of the operation, herbicide weed resistance, emerging insect issues and fertility needed to be addressed. Additionally, growers are actively seeking new risk management, marketing strategies, and other methods to manage depressed commodity prices. Alternative tillage strategies to improve drainage and water infiltration into the soil profile also need to be promoted to row crop producers.

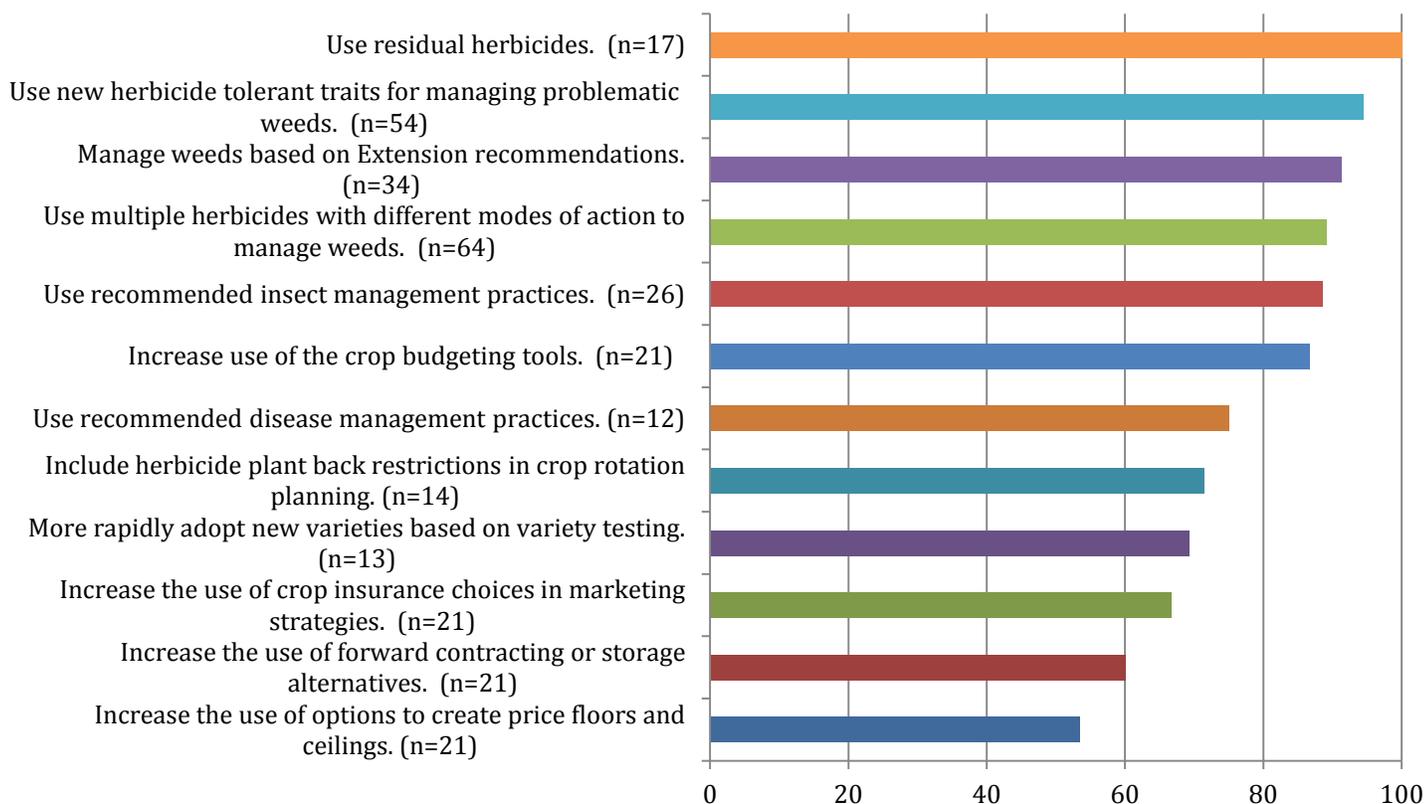
Response: After meeting with the Nueces County Ag and Natural Resource Committee and the Row Crops Task Force in 2016 to review past programs and emerging issues, programming efforts were directed to weed, insect and fertility management by these advisory groups. Therefore, AgriLife Extension in Nueces County developed the following activities to address these relevant issues:

- ⊕ Field Crop Symposium: This January 12th event offered its 43 participants detailed instruction on weed, disease, insect, and soil fertility management, as well as cropping systems and decision aids for crop producers.
- ⊕ Demonstrations and Applied Research: Variety trials for Grain Sorghum (4) and Cotton (2) were established across the county as well as, a cotton defoliation demonstration.
- ⊕ Crop Tour: This May 31st program had 50 participants in attendance. The tour highlighted demonstration plots in the county, as well as, the use of new technology cotton, drift management, financial management tools and agricultural drone regulations.
- ⊕ Cotton Defoliation Turn-row Meeting: On July 28th, 12 producers participated in a turn-row meeting showing highlighting the results of various defoliation treatment options for the 2017 cotton crop.
- ⊕ Soil Testing Campaign: The fall campaign promoted the importance of soil testing. Submitted samples represented 4,000 acres.
- ⊕ Crop Risk Management and Marketing Workshop: Strategic business planning, crop insurance options, and marketing strategies were presented.
- ⊕ Fall CEU Conference: This program focused on weed management and new herbicide technology for row crop production. The October 19th program had 89 participants.
- ⊕ Weed Management and Tillage Workshop: On November 8th, 35 row crop producers learned about managing herbicide resistance, control strategies for key weed species, and weed control options for various tillage systems. The use of pre-emergent residual herbicides was also discussed.
- ⊕ Pesticide Education: Private Applicator and Worker Protection Standards Training were offered to 38 participants. A total of 45 hours of pesticide continuous education units were offered during the year; 189 individuals received CEUs. A \$17,450 value to program participants at \$25 per CEU hour.
- ⊕ Weekly News Articles ⊕ Bi-Monthly Newsletters ⊕ One-on-one Assistance

Results: To determine the programmatic results of the Row Crop Management Program, a retrospective post evaluation instrument was administered during the Field Crop Symposium, Crop Tour, Crop Risk Management and Marketing Workshop, Weed Management and Tillage Workshop, and Fall CEU Conference to capture program impact on the use of recommended best management practices for row crop and forage producers. Results are as follows:

- ⊕ Participants indicated a total anticipated economic benefit for their operations at \$2,616,365.
- ⊕ Participating growers managed a total of 198,377 acres.
- ⊕ 244 individuals participated in the evaluated programs.

Percentages of producers who have intentions to adopt recommended practices are as follows:



Summary: Programmatic results of this program were valued at \$2.6 million by the 179 individuals completing evaluations. Willingness to adopt best management practices and increase knowledge in the areas of weed and soil fertility management were measured in the evaluation instruments and reflected in the economic value participants placed on the program.

Looking Forward: Programming efforts will be directed to issues and concerns that have been identified by the Nueces County Crops Task Force as relevant to Coastal Bend row crop producers. Screening new variety releases for suitability will continue to be essential, as variety selection affects all other management decisions for that crop. Emphasis also needs to be placed on weed management and concerns about glyphosate weed resistance. Increasing knowledge of different herbicide chemistries will also become more important as conservation tillage increases. Fertility management will continue to play a role in grower’s sustainability concerns.

Acknowledgements: Special thanks to the specialists and speakers who presented at the above mentioned programs and to Nueces County Crops Task Force and the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee. Additional, thanks to Mr. Bobby McCool for coordinating joint educational programs.

V A L U E

Crop and Forage Production Education



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service programs targeted to producers of crops and forages are increasing profitability and productivity of farmers, thereby helping to build and sustain rural economies and support jobs.

For more information on this program or others like it, please contact Jason Ott at 361.767.5223, j-ott@tamu.edu or your local Texas A&M AgriLife Extension County Office.

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Ranch Management

Jason P. Ott, County Extension Agent –Ag/NR
Nueces County
2017



Relevance: In Nueces County approximately 33,800 acres are used as rangeland and pastureland. While this is a small percentage of the overall county land area, hay and livestock production account for almost 10% of the total agricultural income for the county. There is an estimated 2,000 head of beef cattle in the county due to drought induced herd reductions of previous years and now many producers are looking for economically feasible ways to increase herd size. Producers are also seeking management strategies that can be more sustainable for wildlife and livestock production. Increased rainfall has also increased interest in improving water features on their properties for enhanced value and productivity as well.

In order to become more sustainable, producers need to enhance the capture of rainfall on their pastures and rangelands to increase forage production. Emphasis needs to be placed to grazing management, water placement, brush control, and risk management tools.

Response: After meeting with the Nueces County Ag and Natural Resource Committee and the Livestock Task Force in 2016 to review past programs and emerging issues programming efforts were directed to water stewardship, forage quality, improving beef herd quality by these advisory groups. Therefore, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Nueces County developed the following activities to address these relevant issues:

- ⊕ Grass Grower's Gathering: This March 14th program addressed spring weed management, improving water quality on grazing lands, the economics of legume pastures, fly control, and alternative livestock marketing strategies for 22 forage producers.
- ⊕ South Texas Agriculture Symposium: The April 20th, program discussed weed management, drones in ranching, fever tick control, the economics of reseeding pastures, and considerations when purchasing replacement heifers.
- ⊕ Demonstrations and Applied Research: Herbicide demonstrations were established on invasive brush and grass species control.
- ⊕ Spring Ranch Management Field Day: On May 18th, participants learned about feral hog management, brush management, riparian plant identification, alternative livestock marketing strategies, and riparian habitat management considerations.

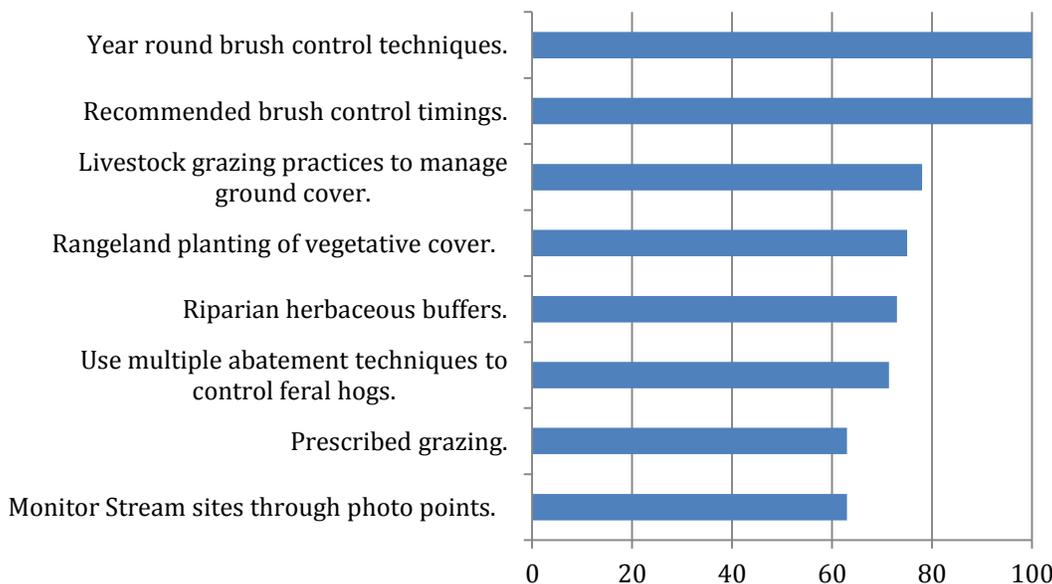


- ⊕ Texas Stream Ecosystem Workshop: Attended by 26 participants on October 3rd, the program educated landowners about riparian buffers, prescribed grazing, feral hogs, vegetation management, and monitoring stream sites.
- ⊕ Coastal Bend Beef Cattle Field Day: Held on December 7th, the program was attended by 10 ranchers and focused on beef production past the ranch gate and included a tour of Sam Kane Beef Processors.
- ⊕ Weekly News Articles ⊕ Bi-Monthly Newsletters ⊕ One-on-one Assistance

Results: To determine the programmatic results of the Ranch Management Program a retrospective post evaluation instrument was administered during the Spring Ranch Field Day and Texas Stream Ecosystem Workshop to capture program impact on the use of recommended best management practices for livestock and forage producers. Results are as follows:

- ⊕ Program participants manage 23,472 acres of range and pasture.
- ⊕ Program participants indicated a total anticipated economic benefit for their operations at: **\$79,090.**

Percentage of producers who have intentions to adopt recommended practices are as follows:



Looking Forward: Programming efforts will be directed to issues and concerns that have been identified by questionnaires and from one-on-one consultations. The Nueces County Livestock Task Force will give direction to programming efforts for the Ranch Management Program. The results of this program will be interpreted to each agriculture program committee and the County Commissioners Court.

Acknowledgements: Special thanks to Dr. Megan Clayton, Dr. Joe Paschal, Mr. Mac Young and speakers who presented at the above mentioned programs. Appreciation is also extended to the Nueces County Livestock Task Force and the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee for their guidance in developing these programs. Additional, thanks to Mr. Bobby McCool and Ms. Candace Moeller for coordinating joint educational programs.

V A L U E

Livestock Production



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension programs targeted to large- and small-scale livestock producers help generate safer food and fiber products with maximum efficiency. The result is quality, consistent, affordable products and industries that support the state's rural economies.

For more information on this program or others like it, please contact Jason Ott at 361.767.5223, j-ott@tamu.edu or your local Texas A&M AgriLife Extension County Office.

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Water Stewardship

Jason P. Ott, County Extension Agent – Ag/NR
Kevin O. Gibbs, County Extension Agent – Horticulture
Nueces County
2017



Relevance: Water quality and quantity have emerged as the preeminent issue across the state including the Coastal Bend Region, as indicated through local input, legislative efforts, and numerous other indicators. Agriculture is the largest water user in the state, and agriculture is under close scrutiny because of the potential for negative environmental (water quality) impacts. Water use in the municipal environment including irrigation of athletic fields, in parks, and home landscapes, as well as, in the home proper constitutes a major portion of water used in Texas. Programs designed to educate all adult and youth water users on water conservation will help reduce overall water use and increase water use efficiency. Care must also be taken to reduce

the risk of water quality contamination from production agriculture areas as well as urban/suburban settings. Several bodies of water in Nueces County are listed as impaired.

Response: The emerging issues of water quality became a concern; therefore, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Nueces County developed the following activities to address this relevant issue in collaboration with the City of Corpus Christi, Nueces County Master Gardeners and Naturalists, the Nueces River Authority, and the Center for Coastal Studies:

- ⊕ **Xeriscape Conference:** Held on January 28th, over 100 residents participated in this year's conference held in collaboration with the City of Corpus Christ. Presentations educated participants about plant selection, soil management, and integrated pest management all in an effort to reduce water use and minimize runoff of landscaping products that could reach our receiving waters.
- ⊕ **Urban Soil Testing Campaign:** The February campaign promoted the importance of soil testing and allowed urban homeowners the opportunity to have tests run at no cost. Over 229 homeowners submitted samples.
- ⊕ **Septic System Inspection and Homeowner Survey:** On February 16 – 18, door to door contact was made with over 400 households west of the Oso Creek on Corpus Christi's Southside to inspect on-site septic systems and educate homeowners about proper maintenance.
- ⊕ **Homeowner Septic System Maintenance Workshop:** Held on February 16th, presentations covered the treatment processes, health and safety considerations, and an overview of how to inspect and maintain the system.

- ⊕ Coastal Bend Landscape Conference: With 50 in attendance for this February 23rd event, the program addressed environmental impacts on our watershed, native landscape plant selection, and tree care.
- ⊕ Corpus Christi Home and Garden Shows: Held in the spring and fall, approximately 15,000 participants attend these annual events. Educational sessions on irrigation management, rainwater collection, proper plant selection, and Earth Kind Landscaping principals are led by Nueces County Master Gardeners.
- ⊕ Yeeha! Youth Curriculum: This Master Gardener developed program demonstrates the runoff pollution model to public school students. This year 411 students were reached.
- ⊕ Texas Stream Ecosystem Workshop: Attended by 26 participants on October 3rd, the program educated landowners about riparian buffers, prescribed grazing, feral hogs, vegetation management, and monitoring stream sites.
- ⊕ Oso Creek Newsletter: Over 350 households receive this quarterly newsletter that provides information on efforts to reduce concentrations of bacteria in Oso Creek, as well as tips for both urban and rural property owners on ways to help improve water quality within the watershed.
- ⊕ Xeriscape Garden Exhibit: The exhibits were designed to offer visitors insight on area water resources, as well as creative and interactive displays. Soil, mulch and compost exhibits are also featured at the garden. It is managed by the Xeriscape Corpus Christi Steering Committee.

Results: To determine the programmatic results of the Water Stewardship Program a retrospective post evaluation instrument was administered during the Texas Stream Ecosystem Workshop to capture program impact on the use of recommended best management practices for landowners. In addition to the retrospective evaluation instrument all participants were given a pre- and post-instruction exams to evaluate knowledge gained. Results are as follows:

- ⊕ Program participants manage 9,942 acres of range and pasture land.

Percentages of respondents (n=26) who have intentions to adopt recommended practices are as follows:

- ⊕ 78% of participants intend to manage grazing to reduce bare ground.
- ⊕ 73% of participants intend to use riparian herbaceous buffers.
- ⊕ 63% of participants intend to use rotational grazing.
- ⊕ 63% of participants intend to manage feral hogs.

The score of each participant's pre- and post-tests was analyzed and shows a 6% increase in knowledge gained from the 14 paired pre- and post- tests. The mean score of the pre-tests was 79.76 with a standard deviation of 17.21. The post-tests had a mean score of 84.52 with a standard deviation of 12.17.

Looking Forward: Programming efforts will be directed to issues and concerns that have been identified by the Leadership Advisory Board, Livestock and Forage Task Force, and Master Gardeners and Naturalists. The Oso Creek Education and Outreach Workgroup will also provide programmatic direction. Emphasis will be placed on water conservation and rainwater harvesting. Best management practices to protect area water sources will also be addressed.

Acknowledgements: Special thanks to the specialists and speakers who presented at the above mentioned educational programs, as well as, the City of Corpus Christi for providing financial support to the Urban Soil Testing Campaigns.

V A L U E

Water Conservation Education



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension programs that teach farmers, homeowners, and business administrators to conserve water are helping reduce demand on the state's limited water resources. Texans benefit from a safer, more reliable water supply at no additional cost.

For more information on this program or others like it, please contact Jason Ott at 361.767.5223, j-ott@tamu.edu or your local Texas A&M AgriLife Extension County Office.

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Making a Difference

Nueces County Horticulture

Kevin Gibbs, County Extension Agent – Horticulture
 Nueces County – 2017

Relevance: Nueces County encompasses more than 838 square miles stretching from Port Aransas and the Island on one side to Sandia on the other. The county is situated around Corpus Christi Bay and stretches

almost to Lake Corpus Christi. On any given day, you could respond to homeowner or business calls from one side of the county to then head the opposite direction to meet another stakeholder. The population of Nueces County has significantly increased and continues to grow, currently at 361,350, with approximately 148,941 households (U.S. Census Bureau 2016). The County Extension Agent must address critical horticulture issues within the county as the population grows. Community leaders and other civic-minded individuals provide volunteer service to support Extension-sponsored educational programs. As the county and population centers grow, the need for more diverse horticultural education also increases. Any given year can be challenging, but in a year where we have a major hurricane, those challenges increase exponentially.

Planning for Recovery

In the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, it's especially important to consider how our landscapes and the environment have been affected. Earthkind values are great matches for recovery!

Earth-Kind uses research-proven techniques to provide maximum gardening and landscape enjoyment while preserving and protecting our environment.



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Response: This year was full of challenges, made even more difficult by Hurricane Harvey. Even though, we were right in the middle of Master Gardener intern training, the horticulture team responded quickly and moved forward with little more than a hiccup. Horticulture assisted our friends in Aransas and San Patricio counties by answering phone calls and making homeowner visits to assist the agents in those counties. See below for some of the many programs that were offered in Nueces County this year:

- ⊕ **Soil Testing Campaign** – more than 300 samples were collected from a partnership with the City of Corpus Christi
- ⊕ **Ag Awareness** – Good bugs, bad bugs and Salad in a Pot
- ⊕ **Community Gardens**
- ⊕ **Xeriscape Symposium** – in partnership with the City of Corpus Christi
- ⊕ **Lunch and Learn** lecture series and community gardens
- ⊕ **Tree Damage workshops** in Nueces County
- ⊕ **Kids Gardening** at Owens Hopkins and Keach family libraries
- ⊕ **Spring and Fall Home and Garden Shows**
- ⊕ **Saturday Lecture series** at South Texas Botanical Gardens
- ⊕ **Rose Society presentation**
- ⊕ **Ray High School lecture series**
- ⊕ **Coastal Bend Landscape Conference**
- ⊕ **Cub Scouts Camp presentation**
- ⊕ **Homeowner visits and workdays** in Aransas and San Patricio Counties

- This year, I was asked to apply for the Corpus Christi Tree Council and was accepted and appointed to represent Extension.
- Nueces County Horticulture, in aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, responded to more than 100 telephone calls from Aransas and San Patricio Counties, all related to trees. Horticulture at last count had made 47 homeowner visits. Almost all visits were related to live oak trees.

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

- Nueces County Horticulture, Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists held a workday at the Aransas County Extension gardens on September 29th. More than 25 people showed up to assist the Aransas/San Patricio Master Gardeners with the clean up effort at the Extension office and gardens.
- In October, we met KEDT public television to film questions for the upcoming high school quiz bowl series.
- The horticulture agent responded to a call for presenters at the 40th anniversary State Master Gardener Conference to be held in College Station, Texas this year. The event will be marked by the opening of a new educational gardens in Corpus Christi. I was pleased to learn that my proposal had been accepted and that I will presenting on “Gardening Lessons we’ve learned from Hurrricane Harvey”, in April.

Results: Even in a topsy-turvy year with a major hurricane and snow occurring in the same year; with the help of volunteers and a terrific assistant, Nueces County Horticulture has been able to make major improvements to the services provided to Nueces County Residents.

Volunteers contributed more than ten thousand hours of service this year at a value of more than \$237,000 dollars. This year, Horticulture has

- Received more than 128 visits to the office in Robstown
- Visited more than 4000 individuals outside of the office
- Responded to more than 700 phone calls
- Sent out more than 38,000 emails or letters
- Distributed the Master Gardener Newsletter each month.
- Written 12 News Columns and conducted 2 interviews, with one being picked up by the AP newswire.

Understanding of how Storm Drains are affected by pesticides after the Landscape Conference

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Excellent	27	60.0	61.4	61.4
	Good	15	33.3	34.1	95.5
	Fair	2	4.4	4.5	100.0
	Total	44	97.8	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.2		
Total		45	100.0		

Summary: Even in an unusual year, Horticulture Extension has found a way to make improvements in the way it provides educational services to the citizens of Nueces County. This is through the combined efforts of extension staff and the terrific volunteers in our county. 95% of Attendees at this year’s Landscape Conference stated that they had either a good or excellent understanding of how pesticides affected storm-water runoff after attending the session.

Looking Forward: Horticulture Extension will continue to provide in depth training to all volunteers in Master Gardener and Master Naturalist Classes. Earthkind beds at the South Texas Botanical Gardens are being updated to include educational resources such as better labeling and trials of Texas Superstar plants. Extension has begun olive trials at both the STBG and in local parks through a partnership with Corpus Christi Parks and Recreation. Close to 300 olive trees from fifteen varieties were planted. This will be a long trial, with hopes of finding several varieties or cultivars that are well suited for the Coastal Bend.

Acknowledgements: Special thanks to my assistant Lisa Martinez and the terrific group of Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists for making this a highly successful year.

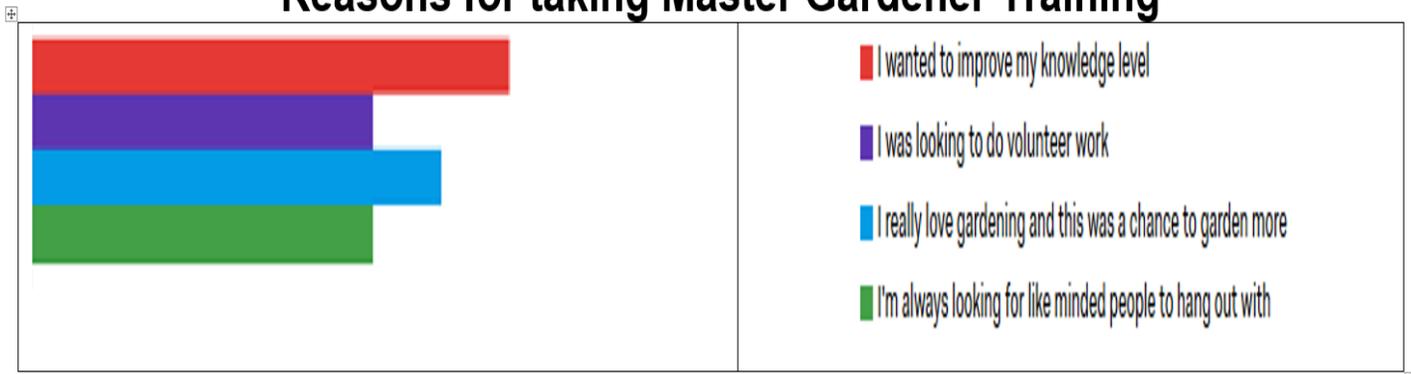
Making a Difference

Nueces County Master Gardener and Master Naturalist Training and Management

Kevin Gibbs, County Extension Agent – Horticulture
 Nueces County – 2017

Relevance: The population of Nueces County has significantly increased and continues to grow, currently at 361,350, with approximately 148,941 households (U.S. Census Bureau 2016). The County Extension Agent must address critical horticulture issues within the county as the population grows. Community leaders and other civic-minded individuals provide volunteer service to support Extension-sponsored educational programs. The Nueces County Master Gardener Program is a primary resource for Extension volunteers to aid and support in planning and conducting horticulture-related programs to county residents, Master Gardeners, and other Extension volunteers. The Nueces County Master Gardener Intern training and the Nueces County Master Naturalists intern training, are volunteer-development programs designed to increase the availability of horticultural and natural resource information in the county. Program objectives are implemented through extensive training. Local volunteers are known as Master Gardeners or Master Naturalists. Master Gardeners assist Extension by conducting school garden projects, answering telephone requests for horticultural information, serving on speakers’ bureaus, establishing and maintaining demonstration/research gardens, working with special audiences in the community, and designing and implementing community improvement projects, as well as coordinating Master Gardener projects. Master Naturalists participate in natural events throughout the county each year providing expertise on birding, butterflies, bees, lizards, snakes and many other topics.

Reasons for taking Master Gardener Training



Response: The Nueces County Master Gardener Association was formed in 1991. Each year, a new group of Master Gardener interns are trained by a very dedicated group of volunteers and Extension Specialists in the field of Horticulture. These interns participate in 60 hours of educational training within the classroom and 50 hours of community service in the field of Horticulture to become “Certified Master Gardeners”. Texas A&M

AgriLife Extension Service in Nueces County along with guidance from the Master Gardener Education Committee developed the following weekly classroom activities from July 31 through November 13th to develop trained master volunteers to support horticulture outreach education within the county:

- ⊕ Mission & History of AgriLife Extension
- ⊕ Mission & History of the MG Program
- ⊕ Plant Science:
- ⊕ Plant Propagation
- ⊕ Soils and Fertility
- ⊕ Nueces MG Projects
- ⊕ Home Vegetable Gardening
- ⊕ Composting
- ⊕ Weed Identification
- ⊕ Entomology
- ⊕ Earth Kind
- ⊕ Plant Pathology
- ⊕ Turfgrass & Integrated Pest Management
- ⊕ Pomology
- ⊕ Rainwater Harvesting & Irrigation
- ⊕ Tree and Palm Planting & Maintenance
- ⊕ Class Project
- ⊕ Woody and Herbaceous Plants

Results: 12 interns completed the Master Gardener Intern Training in 2017. Interns also contributed a total of 213 community service hours to Nueces County on horticulture projects. Currently, \$23.56 per hour is the rate used to value volunteer time. Therefore, interns are responsible for contributing \$5,018.28 worth of volunteer hours to Nueces County. Moreover, Certified Master Gardeners from previous intern classes provided 6924.50 community service hours to Nueces County at a value of \$163,141.22. These community service hours were accumulated volunteering at school garden programs, the food bank community gardens, the Botanical Gardens, and much more. Master Naturalists contributed 2958 volunteer hours to the county, for a value of \$69,690.00.

Summary: Combined, the Master Gardener and Master Naturalist programs contributed over 10,095 hours of service to Nueces County or approximately \$237 thousand dollars in volunteer time.

Looking Forward: Horticulture Extension has decided to alternate between evening classes one year and day classes the next. This

allows us to include the working public who has an interest in the Master Gardener program, as well as our traditional group of Master Gardener recruits. Master Naturalists offer weekend classes, with great success; but we did not want to compete for time and space. The Earthkind beds at the South Texas Botanical Gardens will be updated to include educational resources and trials of Texas Superstar plants. Extension has begun olive trials at both the STBG and in local parks through

Value - Action Threshold - Earthkind principles



What is an Action Threshold?

An action threshold is the point at which an unacceptable economic or aesthetic impact on the landscape is reached. Once this decision has been made one or more of the 4 control tactics (cultural, mechanical, biological, chemical) may be implemented.

a partnership with Corpus Christi Parks and Recreation. Fifteen varieties were planted. This will be a long trial, with hopes of finding several varieties or cultivars that are well suited for the coastal bend.

Acknowledgements: Special thanks to the specialists and speakers who presented at the above-mentioned educational programs. We had great presenters this year.

For more information on this program or others like it, please contact Kevin Gibbs at 361.767.5217, kevin.gibbs@ag.tamu.edu or your local Texas A&M AgriLife Extension County Office.

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2017 Nueces County Better Living for Texans (BLT)

A Fresh Start to a Healthier You! and Walk & Talk

By: Norma Muñoz, County Extension Agent – Family & Community Health

Relevance

More than 3.7 million individuals receive benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), historically known as food stamps. Studies have shown individuals who live in poverty (including SNAP recipients) have dietary intakes that are not in agreement with current recommendations (i.e. Dietary Guidelines or MyPlate). This audience, like many, may not recognize their risk for foodborne illness. Having enough food to eat is also a challenge; an estimated 1 in 6 households in Texas experience food insecurity.

Response – Better Living for Texans (BLT)

The BLT Program is a cooperative endeavor among Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), and the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) of USDA. A component of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), BLT offers food and nutrition education to SNAP recipients, applicants, and other low-income audiences to help improve their ability to plan and prepare nutritious meals, stretch food dollars, and prepare and store food safely. BLT also incorporates gardening and the *Walk Across Texas* program to promote physical activity and improve access to vegetables and fruits.

During 2017, 681 Nueces County adults completed the BLT *A Fresh Start to a Healthier You!* series. This program focuses on improving vegetable and fruit intake, meal planning, increasing physical activity, and adopting selected behaviors that can reduce the risk of foodborne illness. Of those participants, 658 completed the 30-day follow-up survey which allows us to assess the extent that targeted behaviors were adopted.

In addition, 122 Nueces County adults completed the BLT *Walk & Talk* program. This program focuses on developing a habit of regular physical activity, while learning about the benefits and nutrients of different fruits and vegetables. Of the 122 participants completing the program, 68 completed the wrap-up survey which also assists us in assessing the behavior change.

Results – Fresh Start to a Healthier You

Average household size was 2.53%; the average age of the participants was 49.42 years. Participation in the selected assistance programs was as follows: SNAP 82.8%, food pantries or other emergency food assistance 22.6%, free/reduced school meals 9.0%, Head Start 1.0%, TANF 2.3%, and WIC 9.5%.

Evaluation results

Changes in targeted behaviors were examined by evaluating the pre-, post- and (where available) follow-up surveys of those individuals who completed the program series.

Vegetable and Fruit Consumption

Behavior	Pre		Post		Follow-Up	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fruit Consumption						
None or rarely	73	11.1%	32	4.9%	11	4.8%
1-2 times a week	151	23.0%	125	19.3%	42	18.5%
3-4 times a week	205	31.3%	224	34.6%	65	28.6%
1 time a day	92	14.0%	84	13.0%	39	17.2%
2 times a day	77	11.7%	107	16.55	43	18.9%
3 or more times a day	58	8.8%	75	11.6%	27	11.9%
Vegetable Consumption						
None or rarely	51	7.8%	30	4.7%	8	3.5%
1-2 times a week	117	18.0%	98	15.3%	36	15.9%
3-4 times a week	224	34.4%	217	33.9%	71	31.4%
1 time a day	73	11.2%	89	13.9%	21	9.3%
2 times a day	107	16.4%	104	16.3%	56	24.8%
3 or more times a day	79	12.1%	102	15.9%	34	15.0%
% of Plate Filled with Fruits and Vegetables						
0	28	4.6%	10	1.7%	2	1.0%
¼	170	27.8%	108	18.8%	37	18.0%
1/3	189	30.9%	141	24.5%	61	29.6%
½	151	24.7%	261	45.4%	81	39.3%
¾	74	12.1%	55	9.6%	25	12.1%

Meal Planning and Food Management Practices

	Pre		Post		Follow-Up	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Plan meals in advance						
Always	87	13.3%	208	32.7%	46	20.4%
Sometimes	189	22.9%	162	25.4%	71	31.4%
Never	96	28.9%	26	4.1%	18	8.0%
Not Sure	24	16.5%	5	0.8%	1	0.4%
Shop for food with a list						
Always	158	24.2%	268	41.9%	73	32.3%
Sometimes	169	25.9%	123	19.2%	50	22.1%
Never	97	14.9%	45	7.0%	18	8.0%
Not Sure	13	2.0%	3	0.5%	2	0.9%
Compare prices when shopping						
Always	200	30.9%	296	46.6%	96	42.5%
Sometimes	147	22.7%	101	15.9%	45	19.9%
Never	78	12.1%	37	5.8%	12	5.3%
Not Sure	11	1.7%	3	0.5%	1	0.4%

Food Safety

	Pre		Post		Follow-Up	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Wash hands before preparing meals						
All of the time	388	59.3%	452	70.6%	146	64.9%
Most of the time	134	20.5%	125	19.5%	45	20.0%
Some of the time	81	12.4%	45	7.0%	23	10.2%
Hardly ever	29	4.4%	15	2.3%	6	2.7%
Not sure	7	1.1%	0	0.0%	2	0.9%
Wash fruits or vegetables before eating or preparing						
All of the time	378	57.5%	429	66.8%	141	62.4%
Most of the time	117	17.8%	123	19.2%	46	20.4%
Some of the time	106	16.1%	69	10.7%	26	11.5%
Hardly ever	35	5.3%	12	1.9%	9	4.0%
Not sure	5	0.8%	2	0.3%	1	0.4%

Change in Physical Activity Behaviors

	Pre		Post		Follow-Up	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
How often are you physically active for at least 30 minutes, five days a week?						
All of the time	180	27.4%	280	43.6%	89	39.0%
Most of the time	149	22.7%	157	24.5%	47	20.6%
Some of the time	189	28.8%	150	23.4%	65	28.5%
Hardly ever	99	15.1%	44	6.9%	19	8.3%
Not sure	10	1.5%	2	0.3%	3	1.3%

Other findings:

67.8% of the participants identified BLT as their first exposure to AgriLife Extension. This suggests that the program is reaching new audiences who otherwise might not have the opportunity to benefit from Extension programs.

76.5% of the participants rated the BLT program as “excellent” while 16.7% rated the program as “very good.”

In addition, 79.8% of the participants reported they were “very likely” to recommend BLT to another person; 16.3% said they were “likely” to recommend the program. In addition, the 89.8% of participants reported they were “very likely” or “likely” to attend another BLT program.

Results – Walk & Talk

- 122 participants walked a total of 16,981 miles.
- The total potential economic impact for Nueces County participants, including health care cost savings and wages lost, is approximately \$92,976

Making a Difference

2017 Nueces County Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities

By: Norma Muñoz, County Extension Agent – Family & Community Health

Relevance

In Nueces County, an estimated **73,471 individuals** receive benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), historically known as food stamps. Studies have shown individuals who live in poverty (including SNAP recipients) have dietary intakes that are not in agreement with current recommendations especially when it comes to consuming vegetables and fruits. In addition, low-income families often live in neighborhoods with limited access to healthy foods (i.e. food deserts), compounding the challenge of eating a healthy diet.

Response – Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities

The Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities (GNHC) program is a cooperative endeavor among Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), and the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) of USDA. A component of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), GNHC works with local partners to establish community gardens in communities identified as a food desert. Targeted towards SNAP recipients (and those eligible for benefits), the program's goal is to improve availability and accessibility of vegetables and fruit in the home by teaching participants (1) how to build gardens and (2) the skills needed to successfully grow and harvest fresh produce. The community gardens also serve as an outdoor classroom for participants who want to apply their knowledge at home (i.e. backyard garden). The program also includes nutrition education from Extension Better Living for Texans (BLT) educators to help participants learn how to incorporate their fresh produce in healthy and budget-friendly recipes. The program is evaluated by assessing the amount of produce harvested and participant feedback via a pre- and post-survey.

During 2017, 216 Nueces County adults completed the GNHC program; 206 participants completed the retrospective post survey.

Results

Participant Characteristics

Participants were primarily female (79.4%) and Hispanic (64.4%). Less than 6% of the participants (n=12) had not completed high school; 30% (n=61) had completed high school and 64% (n=130) had completed some college or a college degree.

Forty-three of the 216 participants (19.9%) received SNAP benefits while 22 (10.2%) reported having children living in the household who received free or reduced price meals at school. Fifty-one percent (n=106) reported they had grown vegetables or fruits before and more than 82% of the participants (n=160) identified the GNHC program as the first Extension program they had attended.

Gardens

A total of 115 community gardens have been established in Nueces County through the GNHC program yielding more than 2,070 pounds in 2017. Cucumber, tomatoes, and peppers were grown most often.

Impact of the Gardens on Availability and Accessibility of Vegetables and Fruits in the Home

Compared to when the program ended, there was statistical increase in the frequency of serving fruit as a dessert and having vegetables as a snack in the home (Table 1). There was also a statistical trend in having more vegetables served as meals and having them cut-up and available in the refrigerator, suggesting that availability and accessibility of vegetables and fruits in the home were improved.

Table 1. Availability and Accessibility of Vegetables and Fruits in the Home

Question	Average Response* Pre	Average Response Post
We have fruits and vegetables in my home.	2.98	3.37
In my home vegetables are served at meals.	2.07	2.33
In my home, fruit is served for dessert.	2.41	2.78
In my home, there are vegetables available to have as a snack.	2.69	3.07
In my home, there is fruit available to have as a snack.	3.02	3.35
In my home, there are cut-up vegetables in the fridge for me and my family to eat.	2.28	2.85
In my home, there is fresh fruit on the counter, table or somewhere else where I and my family can easily get them.	2.93	3.25

*Based on a 4-part Likert scale: 1=hardly ever; 2=sometimes; 3=often; 4=almost always. **NS means no change from a statistical standpoint although an upward trend is always encouraging.

Summary

These results suggest that the GNHC program is playing an important role in improving the availability and accessibility of fresh produce (particularly vegetables) in the home of the GNHC participants. Although not shown, participants who before reported a significant increase in self-perceived knowledge/skills related to gardening. Overall, more than 91% of the participants (n=185) rating their gardening knowledge and skills as either “good” or “excellent” at the end of the program.

Making a Difference

2017 Nueces County Fuel Up to Play 60 and Walk Across Texas! Corpus Christi Independent School District

By: Norma Muñoz, County Extension Agent – Family & Consumer Science

The Fuel Up to Play 60 initiative was implemented in Corpus Christi Independent School District in the 2014-2015 school year. CCISD partnered with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Dairy Max to provide staff with program training and provide students with opportunities to improve their healthy eating and physical activity environment.

Walk Across Texas! is an eight week program to help people of all ages support one another to establish the habit of regular physical activity. Walk Across Texas! is recognized as a Best Practice Physical Activity Program by the Texas Department of State Health Services.

Relevance

- Nationally, 17.5 percent of children ages 6 to 11 year old and 20.5 percent of 12 to 19 year olds are obese.
- Texas ranks 32nd in the nation and has a child overweight or obesity rate of 32.2 percent.
- Texas ranks ninth in the nation as the most physically inactive state.
- Less than 50% of Texas adolescents consume less than 1 fruit or vegetable daily.
- 25% of Texas adolescents consume sugared drinks on a daily basis.
- 30% of Texas adolescents are physical active on a daily basis.
- 32.9% of Texas adolescents watch three or more hours of TV daily.
- Regular physical activity and controlling weight can significantly reduce the incidence and impact of chronic diseases like heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer, high blood pressure and depression.
- Regular physical activity is also associated with fewer physician visits, hospitalizations and medications.
- Community-wide programs like Walk Across Texas! have been strongly associated with significant increases in physical activity.

Response

CCISD students participated in a lesson series conducted by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service staff. The lessons delivered included, Drink Low-Fat Milk and Water Instead of Sweetened Drinks and Power Up Your Day! Eat Breakfast. Both lessons focused on incorporating low-fat dairy products into their diets. These lessons met the *Healthy Eating Play* requirement for each school.

Corpus Christi ISD physical education students were challenged to map the distance they walked over eight weeks on a map of Texas. Throughout the eight weeks students were educated about the Walk Across Texas! program, the benefits of physical activity, and encouraged to make regular physical activity a part of their day, in and out of school. The WAT! program fulfilled the *Physical Activity Play* for each school.

Results and Future Plans

- Physical Activity: 12,302 students walked 446,576 miles
- Nutrition Education and Recipe Demonstrations: 10,642 students were exposed to one lesson or the six-lesson series.

Student participation and miles walked increased from 2016. Student participation increased by over 8.5% and miles walked increased by almost 7% respectively. With the continued increase in participation, the Walk Across Texas and Fuel Up To Play 60 program will continue to be conducted and provide events throughout the year to kick-off and celebrate accomplishments.



Making a Difference

2017 Nueces County CEP Childhood Obesity Prevention Stephanie Bowman, Extension Agent-Family & Community Health *Meeting Needs, Changing Lives*

Relevance:

Childhood obesity continues to be a nationwide concern. According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute's website, portion sizes have increased dramatically within the last 20 years. Consequently, American families have become accustomed to eating large servings of food. In addition, children are spending more time in front of a screen (i.e. television, iPad, computer, video games), contributing to a decrease in active play. This combination of increased calorie intake and adoption of sedentary lifestyle has serious implications for the health and well-being of the youth. In Nueces County, 25% of the population is in poor or fair health and 34% of adults are obese, according to County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. Research suggests that children who adopt healthy diet and activity-related behaviors at a young age are likely to continue those behaviors as adults. Healthy lifestyle choices such as increasing fruit and vegetable intake and getting recommended amounts of physical activity may lower the risk of developing chronic diseases like heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. There is a need to implement youth nutrition programs in limited-resource communities to teach children and their families the importance of adopting healthy habits.

Response:

Choose Health: Food, Fun, & Fitness (CHFFF) is a six-lesson youth nutrition curriculum. This lesson series was provided for elementary through high school age students at six locations: Gloria Hicks Elementary School, Luther Jones Elementary School, Magee Elementary School Summer Latchkey, the Women's Shelter of South Texas Kids Camp, Foy H. Moody High School (Food Science and Culinary Arts classes), and Blanche Moore Elementary School. Lessons from the CHFFF curriculum were also provided for Corpus Christi I.S.D. schools' physical education classes, housing authorities, and other after-school and summer youth programs. The goal of the program is to encourage healthy diet and activity-related behaviors in youth, through fun and hands-on educational sessions. The program promotes the importance of reading the Nutrition Facts label, limiting consumption of sweetened drinks and high-fat, high-sugar foods, and getting the recommended daily amount of physical activity. It also encourages youth to choose nutrient-rich foods and snacks, emphasizing the importance of eating fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and low-fat dairy. During the sessions, students played interactive games to learn and experience fun ways to stay active. Also after each lesson, students took away ideas for healthy snacks and meals, with recipes sent home in family newsletters. Healthy recipe demonstrations were provided with sample tastings for each child. Data was collected through pre- and post-tests, given to participants in paper survey format.



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Results:

- 6-lesson CHFFF series was provided for 1,206 elementary-high school age students at 6 sites
- 91 youth contacts were reached at additional sites including schools, housing authorities, daycares, and after-school youth programs
- The number of youth who reported choosing healthy snacks “most days” or “every day” increased from 39% to 40%
- After completing the program, when participants were asked how hard it would be for them to **eat fruit for a snack**, 83% responded “not hard at all”
- After completing the program, when participants were asked how hard it would be for them to **choose water instead of soda or Kool-Aid when they are thirsty**, 60% responded “not hard at all”
- As a result of the program:
 - 89% agreed that they **learned the foods that they should eat every day**
 - 86% agreed that they **learned why it is important to eat a healthy diet**
 - 87% agreed that they **learned how to make healthy food choices**
 - 71% agreed that they **eat more fruits and vegetables**
 - 87% agreed that they **drink more water**
 - 61% agreed that they **encourage family and friends to eat meals together**
 - 85% agreed that **being active is fun**
 - 84% agreed that **physical activity will help them stay fit**



The following are student responses when asked about what they learned from the *Choose Health: Food, Fun, & Fitness* program:

- “Always stay healthy and eat fruits and vegetables every day.” (3rd grader)
- “I learned how to read labels on boxes.” (3rd grader)
- “It’s important to choose healthy foods and exercise.” (4th grader)
- “I learned how to make new foods.” (4th grader)
- “I eat more fruit and less fast foods.” (5th grader)
- “A grain has three parts.” (5th grader)

Making a Difference

2017 Nueces County CEP Balanced Living Stephanie Bowman, Extension Agent-Family & Community Health *Meeting Needs, Changing Lives*

Relevance: The definition of balance is stability, equality, and harmony. Living a healthy, balanced life requires more than just engaging in physical activity and eating nutritious food. Balanced living is achieved by taking appropriate care of all areas of life. Individuals achieve greater life balance when they do not let one area of life take over all their time at the expense of other priorities. Ultimately, living an unbalanced life can lead to stress, health problems, poor relationships, and lost productivity.

Response: Balanced Living is a five-part series: *Balance Your Time, Manage Your Stress, Feed Your Body, Move Your Body, and Rest Your Body*. Although many things are a part of balanced living, these five factors are the major components addressed in this curriculum because these areas tend to be overlooked when life gets hectic or out of control. The goal of this series is for participants to gain knowledge and skills to live a more balanced life. In 2017, 48 adults participated in the Balanced Living series. In partnership with the Nueces County Community Action Agency (NCCAA) Birth to Five Head Start Program, the series was provided for Head Start staff, Robert Driscoll Elementary School Head Start parents, and El Tejanito Head Start parents. At the end of each class, participants were encouraged to set SMART goals that would help them balance their lives.



Results: To determine program results, a retrospective pre/post evaluation was administered to each participant after each class. The evaluations measured participants' behavior before the program and what participants' intended their behavior to be after the program. The following tables show the percentage of respondents who either "**strongly agreed**" or "**agreed**" with each behavior statement before and after taking each class.

Session 1: Balance Your Time

Survey Question	Before Class	After Class	Percentage Increase
I determine priorities on a regular basis	46.7%	80%	71% increase
I compare my use of time with my priorities	26.7%	80%	200% increase
I simplify an area of my life	20%	86.7%	334% increase

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Session 2: Manage Your Stress

Survey Question	Before Class	After Class	Percentage Increase
I recognize and respond to symptoms of stress	92.6%	100%	8% increase
I identify specific sources of stress in my life	85.2%	100%	17% increase
I evaluate my sources of stress before trying to cope	55.6%	100%	80% increase
I use different coping strategies for different sources of stress	63.0%	100%	59% increase

Session 3: Feed Your Body

Survey Question	Before Class	After Class	Percentage Increase
I eat when I am hungry	63.0%	96.3%	53% increase
I stop eating when I am no longer hungry	30.0%	92.6%	209% increase
I pay attention to my food and don't do other things while eating	26.0%	92.6%	256% increase
I eat mindfully	22.2%	96.3%	334% increase

Session 4: Move Your Body

Survey Question	Before Class	After Class	Percentage Increase
I am physically active on a regular basis	33.3%	100%	200% increase
I do aerobic activities on most days	11.1%	55.6%	401% increase
I overcome barriers to being physically active	22.2%	100%	350% increase
I fit physical activity into the things that I already do	77.8%	100%	29% increase

Session 5: Rest Your Body

Survey Question	Before Class	After Class	Percentage Increase
I practice good sleep habits	25%	100%	300% increase
I get 7-8 hours of sleep a night	37.5%	100%	167% increase

Success Stories

Upon the completion of the program, participants were asked to report ***“something you are doing as a result of participating in Balanced Living.”*** The following are participant responses:

- “Eating mindfully and managing stress in a more positive way”
- “Trying not to stress over uncontrollable things”
- “Exercising more”
- “Turning off electronics 30 minutes before bedtime”
- “Using the hunger scale to eat more mindfully”

Making a Difference

2017 Nueces County CEP Financial Literacy Stephanie Bowman, Extension Agent-Family & Community Health *Meeting Needs, Changing Lives*

Relevance:

Based on 2013 data from the U.S. Census Bureau, some 45.3 million people, including children, live in households that have incomes below the Federal poverty level, while another 87.5 million live between 100 and 200 percent of their poverty threshold. In Texas, more than one-third of the population is below the poverty level. In Nueces County, 31% of children are living in poverty while 42% live in single-parent households. Steady rates of unemployment (4.9% in Nueces County), foreclosures, and credit delinquencies have contributed to increased interest among consumers in budgeting, saving and cutting back spending. Research indicates that people of all ages, incomes, and education levels lack the basic financial knowledge and skills to ensure long-term stability for themselves and their families. All individuals are confronted with multifaceted issues that can affect their financial stability. Learning effective financial literacy skills at an early age is a crucial step in helping adolescents move towards a more stable future. Empowering adolescents and adults with limited means by giving them the information they need to build financial capability is critical. The current fluctuating economic condition increases the need for continued financial literacy education.

V A L U E	
	<p>Financial Literacy</p> <p>Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service financial literacy programs provide adults and youth with basic financial education and resources to help them set and reach financial goals and plan for the future. When Texans make better financial decisions and implement recommended financial management practices, they increase their ability to achieve financial security.</p>

Learning effective financial literacy skills at an early age is a crucial step in helping adolescents move towards a more stable future. Empowering adolescents and adults with limited means by giving them the information they need to build financial capability is critical. The current fluctuating economic condition increases the need for continued financial literacy education.

Response:

Welcome to the Real World! is a financial education program designed to give teens the opportunity for real-world financial experiences without the real-world consequences. The program consists of two components: financial education and a real world expenditure decision making opportunity. In this simulation of the real world, participants are given a career or occupation with a monthly salary. They assume that they have completed basic educational requirements for their careers and are single and 25 years of age. They live on their own and are independent with no financial support from family or others. It is an active, hands-on, real-life simulation that gives young people the opportunity to explore career opportunities and make lifestyle and spending choices similar to those adults face on a daily basis. Youth are able to make a connection between education and career, and also understand the importance of following a budget and strategies for handling credit and managing debt. In 2017, *Welcome to the Real World!* was implemented as a three-session series for teens at W.B. Ray High School in Corpus Christi.

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Results:

In 2017, 60 Nueces County teenagers completed the *Welcome to the Real World!* program series. To evaluate program effectiveness, participants were given a retrospective post survey to complete at the end of the series. Data was collected and analyzed.

- 49 surveys were collected
- 63% of participants were Hispanic, 18% White, 8% African American, and 10% Other
- 89% of participants were *satisfied* with the activity as a way to learn about money management (49% *mostly satisfied*, 40% *completely satisfied*)
- 51% of respondents indicated that they were surprised at the number of bills to be paid each month
- After the program, 100% of respondents reported being *familiar* (33% *somewhat familiar*, 67% *familiar*) with “*how to use a register to keep track of transactions*” as opposed to 33% before the program
- After the program, 100% of respondents reported being *familiar* (21% *somewhat familiar*, 79% *familiar*) with “*how to create and follow a spending plan (budget)*” as opposed to 48% before the program
- When asked how likely they are to “*complete my education so that I can reach my career goals,*” 67% of respondents said they *definitely will*

Participants were asked, “***How has your view of life in the future changed as a result of participating in the Welcome to the Real World! Program? (Please explain.)***” The following are participant responses:

-I'm going to start keeping track of my finances

-Helped me understand what I want in the real world and what I want to do

-I learned how to keep track of costs

-Helped me learn how many bills have to be paid when you live on your own

-It's important to save money

Making a Difference

2017 Nueces County Walk Across Texas! Lynn Mutz, Health Agent – Healthy South Texas

Walk Across Texas! is an eight-week program to help people of all ages support one another to establish the habit of regular physical activity. Walk Across Texas! is recognized as a Best Practice Physical Activity Program by the Texas Department of State Health Services.

Relevance

- 33.7% of Texans are obese⁴.
- 27.2% of American adults report no leisure time physically activity².
- 16.6% of youth report no physical activity².
- Only 19% of adults and 30% of youth reported they get regular, moderate exercise to meet physical activity guidelines².
- Texas ranks 9th in the nation as the most physically inactive state².
- Texas ranks 8th as the state with the highest adult obesity rates⁴.
- Texas ranks 15th as the state with the highest rates of obese 10-17-year olds⁴.
- Regular physical activity and controlling weight can significantly reduce the risk and impact of chronic diseases like heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, cancer, high blood pressure, and depression³.
- Regular physical activity is also associated with fewer physician visits, hospitalizations, and medications.
- Chronic diseases account for 70% of deaths and 86% of U.S. health-care costs¹.
- Community-wide programs like Walk Across Texas! have been associated with significant increases in physical activity.

Response

For eight weeks, teams of up to eight people, school classes, or individuals virtually walk 832 miles across the State of Texas.

- Visit <http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu>.
- The program begins with a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service agent forming a community task force with members from targeted groups, such as schools, worksites, churches, etc.
- Plan Kick-Off, Half-Way, and Recognition activities.
- Train site managers, captains, teachers, and other volunteer helpers.
- Register participants online.
- Enter mileage online.
- Participate for eight weeks.
- Provide recognition for various accomplishments throughout the program.

Results

Walk Across Texas! significantly increases participants' activity.

- 155 Texas counties participated in 2017.
- 46,960 people registered statewide in 2017.
- 449 adults registered and participated in Nueces County.

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

- 143 adults completed the eight-week program in Nueces County.
- Participants finishing the eight-week period averaged a daily mileage increase of 4.07 miles statewide.
- 92 percent reported they benefited from participating in the program.

Economic Impact

- Medical expenditures are 2.3 times higher for those with diagnosed diabetes compared to those without¹.
- Including the cost of lost wages, the total potential economic impact for the 2017 adult participants is approximately \$4,709,304.

Success Statements

- The program encourages you to exercise more than I typically would, which is a good thing. It helps me to choose healthier options because I am becoming more active. Great program that demonstrates team work and reaching personal goals set for yourself.
- Lost a little weight and got into the habit of being more physically active.
- Besides losing weight, participating in the program reminds me to always be active. It pushes me to exercise more and live a healthier life.
- Participating in Walk Across Texas made us exercise together as a family. It was really nice to do this together.
- I was able to set and maintain my personal goals.
- It was fun setting goals and competing with my coworkers.
- We worked together to encourage and promote healthy and active lifestyle.

Future Plans

Healthy South Texas and Texas A&M Agrilife Extension plan to continue to address this issue and plan to continue to implement the Walk Across Texas! program in 2018.

VALUE

Walk Across Texas



This eight-week fitness and health program challenges participants to adopt a habit of regular exercise. Research indicates that a walking routine of this duration is more likely to lead to continued moderate exercise, which improves quality of life and reduces the risk of chronic disease (including type 2 diabetes). This program yields public value in the forms of reduced public health care costs and a healthier, more productive workforce.

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2016). *Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion*. <http://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/> (accessed October, 2016)

²Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *State Indicator Report on Physical Activity, 2014*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014

³Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (2016). *Chapter 2: Physical Activity Has Many Health Benefits*. <https://health.gov/paguidelines/guidelines/chapter2.aspx> (accessed October, 2016).

⁴Trust for America's Health and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2017). *The State of Obesity: Obesity Rates and Trends*. <http://stateofobesity.org/> (accessed December, 2017).

4-H and Youth Development

Science of Agriculture Educational Program

Kyle McManus, County Extension Agent – 4-H & Youth Development
Nueces County
2017



Relevance: In Nueces County much of the county is urbanized, but agriculture plays an important part in the income of Nueces County. Total agriculture production income in the county totals 150 million dollars. Row crops and small grains account for 88% of the total agriculture income. Nueces County farmers farm 300,000 acres in Nueces County. Approximately 100 thousand acres are planted in cotton and 150 thousand in grain each year.

Agriculture has a direct link to the population, and our youth are many times unaware of this fact. As today's youth are further removed from farming, the importance of agriculture and how it impacts their daily lives is unknown.

Response: "Ag Awareness" Day was coordinated for October 24, October 25, and October 26. The joint effort involved Texas Farm Bureau, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, and volunteers throughout the community.

Sessions for the event included:

- Dairy
- Farm Equipment
- Beef Cattle and Horses
- Sheep and Goats
- Good Bugs Bad Bugs (Entomology)
- Gardening & Water Conservation
- Pigs
- Poultry & Hatching Chicks
- Cotton
- Texas Farm Bureau Trailer-Ag ID
- Chemical Safety



4-H and Youth Development

Results: 443 third-grade students attended the event on Tuesday, October 24th. On Wednesday Oct. 25th, 511 students attended, and 449 attended on Thursday Oct. 26th, for a total of 1403 students. Bishop Elementary was identified as the sample set of students to complete the evaluation. Students were tested one month after completion of the sessions, to measure educational changes.

The student survey for Nueces County Ag Awareness Day was scored and analyzed. The table below shows the questions with the most percent change in correct answers. Questions cover topics from dairy, animals, poultry, insects, farming equipment, and cotton.

Table 1. Knowledge change based on retro post-test given to sample set.

2017 Science of Agriculture Evaluation			
Question	% Correct Pre-Education	% Correct Post-Education	Percent Change
Agriculture affects your life if you eat or wear clothes.	22.3	74.6	234.53
Agriculture is more than food.	30.2	72.6	140.40
Agriculture touches my life every day.	30.8	72.5	139.39
Agriculture will be more important as our population gets larger.	29.5	70.6	139.32
Tortillas, chips, and sodas can be made from corn.	39.4	75.3	91.12
Dairy cattle are raised for meat.	22.3	42.3	89.69
Protein (meat and eggs) helps build strong muscles.	50.9	89.2	75.25
Eggs are a good source of protein.	58.3	92.3	58.32
Wheat is made into flour which makes bread, pasta and crackers.	56.3	88.9	57.90
I intake water by drinking water and eating food with water in it.	62.3	93.8	50.56

Students were asked if “Agriculture affects your life if you eat or wear clothes.” Pre-test showed 22.3% of students agreed that agriculture does affect them every day versus 74.6% on the post-test for a **234.53% change**. Additionally, when asked if “Agriculture touches my life every day” the students had a **139.39% change** in knowledge. These changes in the students’ knowledge meet our goal to educate youth on the benefits of agriculture to the public.

4-H and Youth Development

2017 Nueces County 4-H Photography

Kyle McManus, County Extension Agent – 4-H & Youth Development



Relevance:

Photography is used as a form of communication. It is used to express ideas, to illustrate, to inform, to report, to document and as a form of time travel. Photography is an ever-growing project in Nueces County, & has no limitation when it comes to who can participate. For this reason, there is a need to provide education & instruction on how to increase skill in knowledge related to photography equipment & technology.

Response:

To meet the needs & interest of the youth in Nueces County, workshops were developed to teach skills related to photography. Lesson & activities at the workshops included day vs night photography, micro vs macro, and still life vs action. Additionally, software programs like Photo Shop and Digital Darkroom were discussed. Lastly, a 4-H teen project leader was utilized to present the information.

Results:

Eighteen youth participated in the Nueces County Photography workshops, with 13 youth completing end of program surveys. The data showed the following:

- 100% of respondents were satisfied or completely satisfied with the topics covered
- 87.5% of respondents plan to take action or make changes based on the knowledge gained from the program
- 100% of respondents were satisfied or completely satisfied with the relevance or information given
- 100% of respondents were satisfied or completely satisfied with the program

As a result of this program, there was significant change in the level of understanding in photo composition, shutter speed, lighting importance and aperture. Results also indicate increased positive behavior change, engagement in learning and decision making.

4-H and Youth Development

2017 Nueces County 4-H Grows Club Management & Volunteer Mobilization

Kyle McManus, County Extension Agent – 4-H & Youth Development



Relevance:

With the growing number of 4-H youth enrolling in the program, the need for trained and educated volunteers and club managers is growing at an even faster pace. It is imperative for the success of the 4-H program that the adult volunteers be trained to help teach and coach the youth in various project areas to assist the agent in expanding the 4-H program and reaching new members. A primary goal, in Nueces County, is to motivate club managers to attend the club manager training, in order to provide them with the needed management tools that will enable them to have a successful 4-H year. In turn, this will also help support the 4-H youth program by teaching the youth particular projects and programs available in Nueces County.

Response:

A club manager training was held in September 2017 for all club & co-club managers in Nueces County. Topics included best management practices & financial management, club chartering, and bylaw adoption & changes. A strong emphasis was placed on letting the kids run the meeting & make the business decisions. This training was combined with the county-wide 4-H club officer training, so that each club's officer team & club management could meet & plan their club calendar for the 2017-2018 year.

Results:

Twenty-two adult volunteers, representing twenty 4-H clubs in Nueces County, attended the Nueces County 4-H Club Manager Training. As a result of this program, the feedback requested from each volunteer who attended was as follows:

- “This training gave confidence & ability to implement new programs for the club”
- “The requirement of club officers & club managers to come together & plan out the club calendar was a great idea, which allowed for greater organization & the officers & club managers to be on same page”
- I thought it was a fun & great idea for the club managers to go through some ice breakers, as it gave me confidence to go back & do it at my club”

Making a Difference

Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program Nueces County Outcome Summary Report

SUPPORTING TEXAS FAMILIES WITH GREATEST NEED SINCE 1969

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) helps young families and youth with limited resources – those most at risk to suffer from hunger, food insecurity and the inability to connect with available support systems. EFNEP offers practical lessons in basic nutrition, food preparation, food budget management and food safety in settings convenient for the participants. EFNEP also includes a walking program for adult participants. Program graduates reflect significant, lasting improvement in eating behaviors and healthy food habits. Texas has a need for EFNEP – 2014 data show that 20% of Texas families with children under the age of 18 were living below poverty level, compared to 18% of U.S. families.

EFNEP REACHES DIVERSE AUDIENCES IN NUECES COUNTY

In Nueces County, ethnically diverse EFNEP nutrition assistants reach youth and adult groups whose principal language may be English or Spanish.

In 2017,

- 524 families enrolled in EFNEP.
- 11,835 youth contacts were made through the EFNEP youth program.
- 51% of families were at or below 100% of federal poverty level.
- 77% of EFNEP adult participants were Hispanic/Latino.
- 17% of EFNEP adult participants were Not Hispanic/Latino, White.
- 2% of EFNEP adult participants were Black.

VOLUNTEER STRENGTHEN EFNEP

In 2017, 77 adult volunteers donated 687 hours of work to EFNEP in Nueces County. At the Texas rate of \$25.15/hour, this volunteerism has a minimum dollar value of \$17,278. Volunteers make a difference in their own communities, and contribute to EFNEP's continued success.

EFNEP MAKES A REAL DIFFERENCE

Adult Program:

Using “hands-on” experiences, EFNEP adult participants complete at least a six-lesson series on stretching food dollars, improving eating habits, and practicing food safety principles. As a result of participation in EFNEP the following food and nutrition behaviors were achieved:

- 91% with positive change in any food group at exit.
- 83% improved in one or more food resource management practices such as using a list for grocery shopping.
- 87% improved in one or more nutrition practices such as using the “Nutrition Facts” on food labels to make food choices.
- 54% improved in one or more food safety practices such as thawing foods safely.
- 27% of program participants reported a positive change in physical activity.

Youth Program:

The EFNEP – Youth program is directed toward low-income school-age youth. These students participate in a series of fun and educational lessons on good nutrition and food safety as part of summer programs, classroom and after-school activities. The following results show how youth participants’ food behaviors improved after attending EFNEP classes.

- 77% improved ability to choose foods according to the Dietary Guidelines.
- 48% improved their safe food handling practices more often.
- 41% improved physical activity practices.

COST – BENEFITS OF EFNEP

Studies have shown that for every \$1 spent of EFNEP, \$10 were estimated to be saved in health care costs and \$2 saved in food costs by participants. For Nueces County, this is \$2.7 million in estimated health care cost savings and almost \$547,150 in food costs.

VALUE

Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program



These nutrition programs teach low-income audiences to prepare nutritious meals, stretch their food resources, improve their food-safety practices, and participate in regular physical activity. This not only improves the quality of life and reduces the risk of chronic disease for participants, but lowers public health-care costs.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Nueces County

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