

Making a Difference 2010

Helping People in Panola County Eat Better and Safer

Relevance

In Panola County 38% of families live at, or below the poverty line. A designated Texas Retirement Community, as Panola County's average age of resident increases, it is predicted that nutritional security will become an ever-increasing concern. Recent national economic downturns have resulted in a 34% increase in the number of families seeking public assistance from WIC and EFNEP. Additionally, the number of 2-wage earning families with small children continues to increase, causing more meals to be eaten out, rather than at home, compromising both budget and health.

Response

Better Living for Texans is a cooperative endeavor among the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Health and Human Services Commission, and US Department of Agriculture. BLT provides educational programs to WIC and Lone Star Card recipients, applicants and other approved audiences to help improve their ability to plan and prepare nutritious meals, stretch food dollars, and handle and store food safely.

Eat Smart is a 12-lesson course (or, 4-lesson condensed course) designed to educate participants on the connection between diet and health. Participants learn to reduce their risk of certain cancers, cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, and food-borne illnesses through dietary means.

Food Protection Management addresses the need for increased education of safe food handling for worker's in the food and child care industries. Accredited by the Department of State Health Services, this program prepares workers to take, and pass the state Certified Food Manager exam and/or the Food Handler's Safety Course.

The **Dinner Tonight** program encourages family mealtime by providing quick, nutritious, cost-effective recipes through weekly video webcasts. Weekly, a new video demonstration is released by a member of the Dinner Tonight team, and disseminated to interested individuals throughout Panola County.

Kid's Cook School is an answer to a direct request for nutrition, food safety, and kitchen safety education for youth. Designed by Panola County FCS Agent, using the Super Chef educational series from the Kentucky Cooperative Education Service, Kid's Cook teaches youth aged 8 – 18 how to effectively plan low-cost, nutrient-dense family meals, and prepare them safely. Also covered are kitchen safety, and knife skills.

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Results

100% of 24 attendees at a tri-county **Food Protection Management** class passed the state exam and are Certified Food Managers. 100% of 18 attendees at a Panola County Food Handler's class passed the state exam for Safe Food Handling. Additionally, 26 members of a local Dutch Oven Society reported increased knowledge, and intent to adopt safe food handling principles at an Outdoor Cooking class.

- “Thanks for teaching us this. I will use a meat thermometer from now on, now that I know how.”
- “I want all of my employees to take the Food Handler's class – it's important for them to know the right way to handle food safely.”



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45 **Dinner Tonight** videos have been released and disseminated to a list of Panola County residents, which has grown from 18 to 86 recipients.

- “I love the Dinner Tonight recipes! I keep my laptop in my kitchen so I can follow along.”
- “ Thanks for another great recipe idea. My kids look forward to trying something new.”

Eat Smart class participants report a 100% increase in knowledge of subject matter, and 87% change in behavior. Behaviors intended to change include:

Using less salt when cooking -----	97%
Using nutrition labels in stores to make wise purchases -----	85%
Eating 2 or more cups of whole fruit (not juice) each day -----	90%
Choosing whole grain foods for at least half of grain foods each day ----	100%
Eating 3 or more cups of vegetables each day -----	80%
Eating 3 or more dairy foods each day -----	70%
Becoming, or remaining physically active -----	85%

Kid's Cook School participants ranged in age from 9 to 18. 50% had no experience in the kitchen, 10% self-reported extensive cooking experience. 100% of participants (and their parents) report a high level of satisfaction with the skills learned. Nine months, post-lesson series, 100% of participants report continued enjoyment cooking for themselves and their family. 4 participants, who had not previously participated in Panola County 4-H Food Show competed, and each competitor placed first in his/her category, earning the right to compete at District level.

- “ I love to bake! I'm so thankful that Miss Sarah taught us to bake bread from scratch!”
- “ My mom didn't use to let cook by myself, but now she lets me make the whole dinner.”
- “ I can't believe I won at the Food Show!!! I want to be chef when I grow up!”

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*Educational programs of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin.
The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating*

