



Extension Education in McMullen County

Making a Difference 2011

*Improving Lives.
Improving Texas.*

The Texas AgriLife Extension Service has been dedicated to serving Texans

for nearly a century. The agency was established in 1915 under the Smith-Lever Act to deliver university knowledge and agricultural research findings directly to the people. Extension programs have continued ever since to address the emerging issues of the day, serving diverse rural and urban populations across the state.

Through a well-organized network of professional educators and more than 100,000 trained volunteers, Extension delivers practical research-based knowledge to Texans in all 254 counties. Our 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 those served are the hundreds of thousands of young people who benefit annually from Extension's 4-H and youth development programs.

Texans turn to Extension for solutions. Its agents and specialists respond not only with answers, but also with resources and services that result in a significant return on investment to boost the Texas economy. The agency custom-designs its programs to each region of the state, relying on residents for input and for help with program delivery. Here are just a few highlights of Extension's impacts on this county and its people:

McMullen County – Summary of Educational Contact

- Total Educational Programs Conducted – 107
- Total Participants – 3,046
- Contact Hours – 3,072
- 4-H Members – 69
- Curriculum Enrichment Participants - 44

Range Management in McMullen County

Relevance

There are over 83 million acres of pasturelands in Texas. Native rangelands serve as a vital resource in livestock production and for wildlife habitat. Control of noxious weeds and invasive brush species on native rangelands continues to be a challenge for landowners. Brush sculpting allows landowners and wildlife managers to maintain or improve wildlife habitat. Livestock producers should utilize range monitoring and proper stocking rates to improve sustainability and rangeland health. McMullen County has minimal row crop production with over 730,000 acres in rangeland in which beef cattle production and wildlife resources are vital to the area economy. Members of the Agricultural and Natural Resource Committee, Soil and Water Conservation District Directors, and the EQUIP Working group have expressed concerns the issue rangeland health in McMullen County is invasive species such as mesquite, prickly pear, and acacia species.

Response

Prescribe Burn Consultations

Result Demonstration Applied Research in Range Management

Result Demonstrations – MAP 28 Rate Trails /Aerial Foliar Treatments on Mesquite

Result Demonstration –Aerial Foliar Milestone rate Mesquite Control Treatments (Dull Ranch)

Drought Management Consultations

Results

Observations conducted by Extension Agent reflect the adoption of best management practices for chemical brush control. As a result of 12 site consultations with ranchers, 8 ranchers utilized IPT treatments for more effective mixed brush species control along fence lines. Previous practices by these producers included using foliar treatments on foliar resistant brush species in addition to the timing. 4 landowners increased their technical level in evaluating foliage and soil temperature conditions for more effective foliar treatments for mesquite control. These 4 producers accounted for a combined total of 4500 acres of brush that were aerially sprayed adopting a best management practice to increase efficacy of treatment.

Character Education in McMullen County

Relevance

Historically, character education and ethics were taught in the home environment, but this has changed as demographics have changed. Our agency is poised to reach youth and has the opportunity to shape ethical young people who will have values as contributing adults. The shift in society's expectation of young people has changed and youth are more disrespectful as a result and lack manners. This problem is widespread among all youth in Texas. The issue of a lack of discipline and respect was identified during the 2004 Texas Community Futures Forum process.

Response

In McMullen County, the Texas Building Character curriculum adopted by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service is utilized to target 3rd and 5th grade students of McMullen County ISD. A weekly lecture series conducted from September through December addresses one of the six virtues of good moral character which includes respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, fairness, caring and citizenship. A pre-test and post-test questionnaire was utilized to measure knowledge gained by students. Statements from the teachers evaluation questionnaire were utilized to document any behavior changes.

Results

A pre-test and post-test questionnaire was utilized as an evaluation tool to determine the degree of knowledge gained by the students. The questionnaire utilized a variety of types of questions that include matching, true and false questions and defining or describing the different virtues related to good character.

Pre-test and post-test scores reflected 37 % increase in knowledge levels for 3rd grade students and 45% increase in knowledge levels was achieved by the 5th grade level students.

Post-test scores reflected a 53 % increase in being able to define the “Golden Rule” as it relates to respect. Less than 18% of students could define the “Golden Rule” on the pre-test.

A 67% increase was noted in the ability for 3rd grade students to describe a respectful person compared to 38% increase for 5th grade students.

A 67% increase was noted for 3rd grade students being able to describe a trustworthy person and 25% increase was posted for 5th grade students being able to describe a responsible person.

Jr. Master Gardner Program in McMullen County

Relevance

The JMG program is currently used through community clubs, after school and school based programs. The JMG program has had documented success in schools validated by research studies indicating an increase in science achievement scores, increased parental involvement, improved leadership/community service, and increase knowledge and consumption of fruits and vegetables for children participating in the Junior Master Gardener Program. The purpose of the Junior Master Gardener program is to grow good kids through igniting a passion for learning, success, and service through a unique gardening education.

Response

A spring garden was established at McMullen County ISD targeting 5th grade students. The school garden serves as an outdoor classroom to teach students about soils, seeds, plant classification, plant identification, weeds, insect identification, plant diseases, nutrition, soil fertility and water conservation. Teaching activities are conducted twice per month from late January through May.

Results

A pre-test and post-test questionnaire was utilized as an evaluation instrument to determine the level of knowledge gained from the teaching activities.

Average scores comparing the pre-test to post-test scores reflected a 55 % increase in knowledge gained.

A 7% increase was noted in student's ability to correctly classify 4 different plants as being either monocot or dicots.

A 71 % increase in knowledge was reflected in the Soil Color, Texture and Structure section of the questionnaire.

A 100 % increase in knowledge was posted for questions concerning soil fertility.

All students learned the value of utilizing mulch to help conserve water.

McMullen 4-H Projects Summary-

The 4-H & Youth Development program in McMullen County strives to expand project areas in order to appeal to a wider audience. Project areas range from the traditional livestock show projects, foods and nutrition, clothing and textiles to the not so traditional such as photography, Science, Engineering & Technology and Shooting Sports. Activities such as livestock judging, grass and pasture identification, and range evaluation were some activities that added this past year. Service learning is an important component of the 4-H program. Members rose to the occasion to help support our local fire fighters. 30 cases of water mixed with a few cases of sports drinks were collected and donated in appreciation for the service in fighting the wildfires this extremely dry year that caused extreme fire danger. Another service learning project conducted by 4-H members during our One Day 4-H Event consisted of picking up and collecting over 1 ton of trash along our Fairgrounds and highways in the Tilden Community.



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