



Cooperative Extension Program *Improving Lives. Improving Texas.*
Prairie View A&M University



2010

“Working hand - in - hand with its Texas A & M System partners, the state legislature, and the communities it serves, the mission of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service to serve Texans through community-based education has remained unchanged for almost a century.”



Committees

"An important principle is that involvement of local people is essential; otherwise, the program becomes an agency program rather than the people's program. Extension experience and research give strong evidence that people have little or no commitment to plans they have had no part in making. It is important and useful to bring a wide range of county interests into the planning process, including people not previously involved in Extension programs, to gain understanding and support by key leaders for overall Extension educational program. Citizen involvement is an effective strategy in program development, especially when Extension provides a meaningful framework for involvement, including the necessary assistance or training in analyzing and interpreting situational information."



Agriculture & Natural Resource

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- Home Lawn Irrigation Auditing
- Agriculture Risk Management
- Emergency Management - Animal Issues
- Cooperative Extension Program-AgNR
- Improving Your Forage Quality on Buffelgrass
- RGV Beef Improvement Bull & Heifer Gain Test Program
- Beef Cattle Health Herd & Horse Program



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AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Home Lawn Irrigation Auditing

Starr County has been a lot of growth in the last eight years through new home development in at least seven new subdivisions. Many of these new homes have installed automatic sprinkler systems that are designed to irrigate lawns for a specific period of time, at specific time in regular intervals. These systems are convenient but can be very inefficient if installed or calibrated incorrectly.



Inefficient Installation.....

Texas AgriLife Extension and Cooperative Extension Program in Starr County addressed this issue by conducting a training on how to effectively install an automatic home sprinkler system and how to calibrate an already installed system to conserve the most amount of water. The educational program had to also address the water needs of plants as this correlates to irrigation management. The five hour program was held at the South Texas College Campus Auditorium.



Agriculture Risk Management

Starr County agriculture producers are subject to production, technological, price, financial, legal and human risks. While they understand that these risks exist, they often make decisions with incomplete knowledge about the nature or magnitude of these risks and their potential impacts on farm/ranch business. They must consider the likelihood of an unfavorable event occurring and its consequences associated with different management strategies. They must then decide which risk management strategy best fits their current situation and their longer term goals.

Texas AgriLife Extension and Cooperative Extension Program with the guidance of the Starr County Agriculture & Natural Resource Committee conducted a year long educational program to educate Starr County producers about risk management programs. These risk management educational activities were held in conjunction with other programs that focused on beef cattle health herd management and forage production and quality.

Local Extension agents partnered with many USDA agencies to make this program possible.

Based on preliminary survey results, it is apparent that this program was effective and that producers are now more aware of USDA Risk Management Program benefits, availability, options and deadlines.

Emergency Management - Animal Issues



According to the Texas Animal Health Commission, every County in the state of Texas is required to have a commissioners court approved animal issues plan. This plan should address animal issues in the event of a natural or man made emergency. This plan should address animal issues in the event of a natural or man made emergency. This plan will be different for every county because every county has its unique situation.

This year Texas AgriLife Extension and Cooperative Extension Program agents formed a committee, with approval from the county judge, to begin work on this plan. The committee has evaluated the county situation, identified threats and has begun devising a plan that addresses emergency management issues related to companion animals and farm/ranch livestock. Although this plan was not completed by the time Hurricane Alex flooded Starr County ranchers along the river, it did serve as a good learning experience to the people working on this emergency animal issues plan. It is the hope of this committee to have this plan completed and approved by early 2011.

Cooperative Extension Program Ag-News

Agent Rolando Zamora Extension Agent CEP-AgNR has developed the CEP-Ag News, Newsletter that brings highlights of programming activities that have been established by the Agriculture & Natural Resource Committee. These programs provide information and resources to public to assist them in their farming and ranching operation. Programs such as Improving Your Forage Quality on Buffelgrass and Beef Health Herd are a few programs provided by the committee. This newsletter also provides updates on youth programs and upcoming calendar of events. We continue to provide assistance to the limited resource audience of Starr County.

Improving Your Forage Quality on Buffelgrass

Forage quality is defined in various ways but is often poorly understood. It represents a simple concept, yet encompasses much complexity. Forage quality often receives far less consideration than it deserves. Adequate animal nutrition is essential for high rates of gain, ample milk production, efficient reproduction, and adequate profits.

However, forage quality varies greatly among and within forage crops, and nutritional needs vary among and



within animal species and classes. Producing suitable quality forage for a given situation requires knowing the factors that affect forage quality, then exercising management accordingly.

In recent years, advances in plant and animal breeding, introduction of new products, and development of new management approaches have made it possible to increase animal performance. However, for this to be realized, there must be additional focus on forage quality.

Buffelgrass is a highly nutritious grass and is considered excellent for pasture in hot, dry areas and is valued for its production of palatable forage and intermittent grazing during drought periods especially in dry land areas. The focus of this educational program highlighted Buffelgrass and its establishment in Starr County.

This Educational Program took place at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish Hall in El Sauz, Texas on August 26, 2010 at 9:00 a.m.

RGV Beef Improvement Bull & Heifer Gain Test Program Fast Approaching

For 12 years now, the Rio Grande Valley Beef Improvement Association has conducted a very successful program known as the Bull Grain Test and Heifer Development Program. "It's designed to give ranchers the information they need to improve their herds. In the past years, we have had seven registered Beef Cattle Producers from Starr County practice this program.



Ranchers pay a fee to deliver bulls and heifers to a feedlot where they are monitored and evaluated for 112 days. The information gathered helps you select the higher-performing animals for your herd. After a two week warm-up period that allows the animals to become acclimated to the feedlot, their daily weight and other parameters are measured.

Among the data collected, ultrasound is used to measure the rib-eye area and back-fat thickness. Other parameters include scrotal diameter to help determine fertility. To determine ease of calving, the pelvic areas of both bulls and heifers are measured. Bulls are measured because they tend to pass on these traits to their offspring.

Beef Cattle Health Herd & Horse Program

Over 20 beef cattle livestock producers from both Starr County and Hidalgo County were present at the Beef Cattle Health Herd and Horse Program which took place on May 27, 2010 at Briggs Ranch off of Hwy 83 in Rio Grande City, Texas.

"The highlights of the program included topics in Range & Pasture Insurance by Adrian Perez, AGRI-INSURANCE, Calf Pulling Demonstration and Floating Teeth in Horses by Dr. Falcon Faries, Associate Professor & Extension Program Leader for Veterinarian Medicine".





Family Consumer Science

- Strengthening Families Programs
- Walk Across Texas
- Better Living for Texans Program
- Do Well Be Well with Diabetes in Spanish



Elva Yolanda Morado, CEA-FCS

FAMILY CONSUMER SCIENCE

Strengthening Families Programs

Strengthening families programs conducted by Extension teach research based family skills that reduce behavior problems improve social competencies and school performance. Violence in the home also decreases as families strengthen bonds and learn more effective parenting and problem solving skills.

Programs conducted for parents in 2010 included such topics as Talking to Children, Father's in the Classroom, Bullying, Sharing Responsibilities, Making Ends Meet, Positive Discipline and Happy Marriage.

Child Care is an essential element of life in our Society. Quality Child Care makes a significant difference in a child's development.

For the past 16 years Texas AgriLife Extension Service has been hosting conferences and programs that support caregivers who directly influence children's well being. Extension is committed to strengthening the quality of child care and training these providers in areas that meets the needs of young children and enhances their development and readiness for school.

Extension partners with Headstart, local business, South Texas College and Hill Country Child Care Providers Association each year in hosting the largest child care conference in the Rio Grande Valley. Child Care providers representing four valley counties attend the annual conference. This year 211 child care providers earned valuable clock hours necessary to maintain their license that is required for licensed facilities and registered home by the Texas Regulatory.

Texas AgriLife Extension Service also partnered with Texas Department of Agriculture in conducting Child/Adult Care Food Program Workshops for agencies and centers receiving reimbursable foods for their child and adult centers. A total of 20 classes were taught for clients and the program will continue into 2011 due to the great success and increased attendance to the workshops.



"Navigating Pathways that Strengthen Early Childhood Education."



Walk Across Texas

Starr County families are concerned about their weight according to a survey conducted with parents are concerned about their weight according to a survey conducted with parents of school age children.

They understand that being overweight not only makes them more susceptible to serious diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. Children as well as adults also have to deal with the stigma of being overweight.

Overweight and Obesity have reached epidemic proportions and have become one of the most critical health issues of our nation. Overweight is an issue of all age groups, all races, and all social – economic groups, approximately 60% of adults in the U.S. are overweight.

The causes are multifaceted. Both behavioral and environmental factors contribute to the rise in being overweight. Societal changes have reduced the opportunities for physical activity. For instance children ride buses where before they walked to school. Corner grocery or drug stores are non-existent and families must drive to make daily or weekly purchases.

The solution to the overweight crisis is: **EAT LESS and MOVE MORE!!**

In response to this Extension utilized a Cancer grant to provide support for a valuable intervention program targeting the burden of overweight in Starr County families. The grant allowed us to make measurable differences in the health of families. Pedometers were purchased and placed in classrooms, homes, churches, centers and businesses. Participants were able to monitor the number of steps they took each day towards good health.

Participants reported:

The more they walked the better they felt, the pedometers motivated them, they slept better after exercising and that after the 3rd week they were not sweating and wheezing as much as when they started the program

Student & Teachers reported:

There was an increase in student alertness, they had better balance and coordination in sports and felt encouraged to participate in track and field events, students were more productive and there was a reduction in absenteeism.

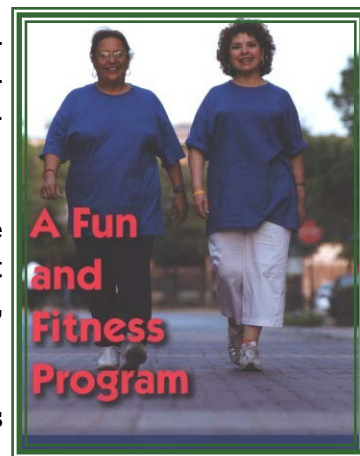
Participants claimed that the driving force was the “motivation” provided by the teachers, parents, coaches, walking teams members and friends. Participants claimed they now have a more

Better Living for Texans Program

Healthy Children and healthy families is what the BLT program is all about. Through the dedicated effort of two program assistants Irma Ortiz and Adela Mancha valuable information on the importance of healthy eating and exercise is taken into the homes of Starr County families.

The program has been operating in Starr County for 15 years providing educational programs to food stamp applicants and other approved audiences. The program objective is to improve the families' ability to plan and prepare nutritious meals, stretch the food dollars, and prepare &

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store food safely! The program is delivered through a variety of teaching methods that reflect the audience needs. Most of the classes are conducted in Spanish. Teaching methods include, lesson series, single educational events one on one consultations, demonstrations, tours and health fairs.

An overwhelming majority of clients that participated in the program reported they”

- Were purchasing healthier snacks for their children
- Were correlating family food preferences to wise food choices
- Were now able to stretch food resources throughout the month
- Were able to compare prices on food items more effectively
- Gained awareness on what foods produced weight gain

A total of **163** families completed the lesson series and **984** youth participated in nutrition programs.



Do Well Be Well with Diabetes in Spanish



Diabetes presents a major health burden for many Starr County residents. Comparison of the rates in Starr County to those of the general U.S. population indicate a two to five fold greater risk in Starr County. In terms of impact in our county, these results imply that over 50% of the individuals older than 35 years are directly affected by diabetes by virtue of having the disease or being first degree relative of a diabetic.

With these statistics in mind a project was initiated through the county. The sites included Las Lomas. Rio Grande City, La Rosita and Roma. A total of 87 were recruited for the project that included a series a classes each with a video. The videos were produced here in Starr County.

The response to the high powered energetic curriculum was quite significant. Participants made great strides and the results were evident in their weekly progress reports. Their blood sugar levels decreased and their self care behaviors demonstrated they gained self confidence and

were given hope that they could control their diabetes. The exercise and moving component was what showed the greatest results. There were participants who came to the classes in walkers and by the end of the project were walking every day without any appliance support.

The lesson series is now being launched throughout the state of Texas due to the very positive results in Starr County.





4H Youth & Development

- Youth Water Screening Program
- Summer Camp
- Water Harvesting Tour
- 4H Expansion
- 4H Family & Consumer Science Projects

4H YOUTH & DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Enrollment Tables

4-H Enrollment 2008-2009	
Club Member	220
School Enrichment	356
Special Interests	1,303
Total	1,879

4-H Enrollment 2009-2010	
Club Member	229
School Enrichment	4814
Special Interests	2255
Total	7298



Youth Water Screening Program

Over 45 high school from Rio Grande City, Roma and San Isidro participated in a unique hands-on water screening program. The program gave students the opportunity to learn about the importance of ground water screening, the water cycle, and non-point source pollution. For this educational activity, students collected over thirty water well samples from across the county. Each of these samples were screened for salinity, PH, arsenic and nitrates. This basic screening gave each student an illustration of how important it is to screen ground water before it is consumed by livestock or used for irrigation. Students also learned about non-point source pollution through an educational display that also discussed the water cycle.



"Hands on water screening"



Summer Camp

Various local youth organizations offer the opportunity to attend educational camps in the summer when students are away from school. These summer camps are excellent learning opportunities but often lack local participation because they require overnight lodging and/or are priced too high for our local youth. The Starr County 4H & Youth Development

Program addressed this issue five years ago when they decided to organize educational one day camps that were affordable to all the local youth. Over the years these camps have allowed over one-hundred Starr County Youth to participate and have taken them to trips along the valley area that are often overlooked as interesting or educational.

Water Harvesting Tour

With this year's abundance of rainfall it is hard to imagine how important water conservation is in our ever growing society. Texas will be facing some serious issues in the next five to ten years that will effect many urban communities. As rural Texas increases due to suburban growth these same water problems will be faced by all Texans. Texas AgriLife Extension and Cooperative Extension Program partnered with Rancho Lomitas through a unique water teaching grant entitled Rio Grande Basin Initiative. This educational program allowed over 250 youth from Starr County to tour a local ranch that has many water conservation projects in place. Students that toured the ranch learned about the unique way of collecting natural rain water to irrigate plants, students also learned about how people can reduce water consumption through the use on native plants. This is also known as xeriscaping. These four hour educational program tours also involved several educators from several schools who brought their students to learn about these water conservation management practices.



Pictured above: Local Botanist Benito Trevino educating a group.

4H Expansion through New Local Project Opportunities

Today's youth have very different interests than youth from five years ago. These interests have youth educators puzzled. Many of these educators are trying to readily adapt programs to catch the interest of today's youth. You guessed it. The Starr County 4H program is also making some changes in some project areas to get more youth involved in a program that has been around for nearly a century. The changes are being made through the input and direction of the local 4H Youth Board.





There are two project areas throughout South Texas that have become popular among young people. The project areas are shooting sports and photography. The Starr County 4H program charted their first ever 4H Shooting Sports club last year and this year we are looking at expanding the 4H Photography Calendar Contest. This contest will hopefully stimulate more youth to grab a camera and enjoy the outdoors. Starr County 4H Photography Calendars will be available January 2011.

4-H Family & Consumer Science Projects

4Hers throughout the county competed in various events during the year-food show and baking entries at the fair were at an all time high.

4Hers enjoyed leaning how to make hobo meals and practicing for new Foods projects 4H Food Challenge - For this contest 4Hers modeled the Food Network's Iron Chef. They had to create a dish using only a predetermined amount of ingredients. Four teams competed at district and one senior advanced to state competition.

The heart of a young persons 4H experience is being able to participate in the countless opportunities & projects that 4H offers. The 4H Clothing & Textile project focused on clothing construction and the consumer aspects of purchasing clothing. 4Hers completed projects for the home for family members and for themselves and participated in the Fashion Show—Three advanced to state competition..



Food Challenge Senior Team



Food Challenge Intermediate Team



Fashion Show Participant



Food Challenge Junior Team