



Extension Education in McMullen County

Making a Difference

*Improving Lives.
Improving Texas.*

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service has been dedicated to educating Texans

for nearly a century. In 1915, the agency was established under the federal Smith-Lever Act to deliver university knowledge and agricultural research findings directly to the people. Ever since, AgriLife Extension programs have addressed the emerging issues of the day, serving diverse populations across the state.

Through a well-organized network of professional educators and some 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 significant returns 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 2014 Educational Contacts

- Total Educational Programs Conducted – 156
- Total Participants – 4,179
- Contact Hours – 2,977
- 4-H Members – 68
- Curriculum Enrichment Participants- 71

Range Management in McMullen County

Relevance

Oil and gas activity in McMullen County has the potential to impact wildlife habitat in negative manner due to increase potential of invasive type grasses being utilized in reclamation of disturbed sites such as pipelines and oil field pad locations. Invasive grasses tend to spread to other areas where they were not planted and have the potential to decrease plant diversity which is essential in maintaining a healthy wildlife habitat.

Response

- Range Webinar Programs
- Dull Ranch Tour – Range Management to Improve Livestock and Wildlife Use
- Quail Appreciation Day – Donnell Ranch – Yeagar
- Consultations
- Web Page – Publications , Video Links

Results

Evaluation survey conducted during the Quail Appreciation Day reflected 30 to 40 percent increase in understanding key plants for quail. Grass species that could pose a threat to grass and plant diversity were also reflected in evaluating quail habitat. Testimonials from one landowner who has major oil activity on his property indicated that he plans to reduce to amount of acres being reseeded to Bufflegass because of the increased awareness on the potential harm it may pose to wildlife habitat. Landowner intends to plant more Kleingrass and native grasses. Troy Construction is currently a contractor working on an extensive pipeline that crosses the county parallel to Hwy. 72. Consultations with contractor have indicated they will plant South Texas native grass ecotypes unless a landowner specifies something different.

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. Broken families, parents lacking parenting skills, television, music, social media are few culprits that impact youth behavior. 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. The Leadership Advisory Board continues to identify teaching moral and ethical behavior through character education as an important issue to address.

Response

In McMullen County, the Texas Building Character curriculum adopted by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service and is utilized to target 3rd and 5th grade students of McMullen County ISD. A weekly lecture and activity 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 and 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 47 % increase in knowledge levels for 3rd grade students and 49% increase in knowledge levels was achieved by the 5th grade level students.

Post test scores reflected 87% increase in knowledge in identifying the six pillars of character that were addressed through lessons and teaching activities. 73% increase was reflected in the post-test for 5th grade students.

Post-test scores reflected a 47 % increase in 3rd graders 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 24% increase was noted in the ability for 3rd grade students to describe a trustworthy person compared to 88% increase for 5th grade students.

A 7% increase was noted for 5th grade students being able to describe responsible behavior.

Statements taken from teachers reflected a change in attitude from students. Students are more respectful and tolerant with each other.

4-H and Youth Development

Students recall many of the lessons and activities when misbehavior or incidents occur. Students will utilize quotes or statements from lessons to make students aware of their misbehavior.

Future program efforts include expanding the Texas Building Character curriculum with the Take A Stand curriculum to assist teachers in addressing the issue of bullying.

Jr. Master Gardener 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 the middle of February 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 involving soils, soil fertility, and plant science.

Average scores comparing the pre-test to post-test scores reflected a 35 % increase in knowledge gained in the soil science section and 18 percent increase in knowledge gained in the evaluation questionnaire for the plant science section.

A 25% increase in knowledge was reflected in the plant processes section of the questionnaire. Students were able to answer about photosynthesis and transpiration.

An 80 % increase in knowledge was posted for questions concerning soil fertility. Students could identify at least one of the elements found in a bag of fertilizer. None of the students were able to identify any on the pre-test.

All students learned the value of utilizing mulch to help conserve water, prevent soil erosion and manage weeds.

Students really enjoy the activities as they learn to cooperate and work as a team. As one student said it best, "Get to learn outside in nature's lab."

One Day 4-H

Relevance

One Day 4-H is a grass roots community service effort for 4-H youth to identify, plan, and implement a community service project that serves the needs of their particular community and/or county. Modeled after the Texas A&M University's Big Event, one day 4-H teaches 4-H members the importance of giving back to their communities based on issues they see are affecting the lifestyles of the citizens. Throughout this process, youth have the opportunity to develop a partnership with adult volunteers as they plan and implement their service project. One day 4-H helps develop the core life skills of communication, responsible citizenship, contribution to group effort, teamwork, self-motivation, problem solving, service learning, planning/organizing, and social skills.

Response

4-H members volunteered to assist the Double Rafter H Clay Shoot raise funds for graduating high school seniors. 4-H members assisted with assembling gift bags, setup of tables and chairs, and serving as trap operators and score keepers. A total of 10 4-H members and parents assisted with the sporting clays shoot that has well over 300 participants

Results

10 4-H members and volunteers assisted with service project. McMullen 4-H provided volunteers for the Double Rafter H Clay Shoot which took place on two days instead one day as in previous years. McMullen 4-H members provided volunteers to assist with the event which had it largest number of participants since it began. The greatest accomplishment is seeing the gratification on people's faces after a hard day volunteering in serving others. Future plans include a service project recruiting volunteers to assist with the Big Shell Beach Cleanup scheduled in February 2015.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

McMullen County

Staff

Isaac J. Cavazos

Contact Us

361-274-3323

i-cavazos@tamu.edu