



Extension Education in Willacy County

Making a Difference

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

EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE *Providing Solutions*

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.

Willacy County – Summary of 2014 Educational Contacts

Organized 4-H Clubs – 4

4-H Club members – 43

4-H Total Volunteers – 9

Willacy County Fair Board members – 28

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Outcome Programs for Willacy County

2014 Hidalgo/Cameron/Willacy County Crop Production Program

Relevance

Nutrient management is an important economic and environmental issue that affects water quality, soil quality and crop productivity. Sugarcane, cotton, grain sorghum and corn are important agronomic crops for the Rio Grande Valley. An estimated 70 percent of sugarcane producers could improve their yields which could enhance the profitability of this crop for all producers. New/underutilized crops need to continue to be investigated such as soybeans and sesame.

Response

In addressing the need for the educational programs, the Agents from the three county area implemented educational programs addressing the following topics:

- Introduction to different irrigation techniques
- Introduction to different pest control techniques
- Conduct Variety trial on Cotton and Grain Sorghum – this was done to identify performance differences in the varieties in the trials.
- Soil test Campaign – This would measure the fertility needs in fields and give a recommended fertilizer application for that field.

Results

- A total of 10 group methods resulted in over 2000 contact hours of education. The economic impact of the RGV Nutrient Management Education Program was measured in terms of potential fertilizer savings that have resulted from increased adoption of soil testing. Using soil test recommendations and producer-planned fertilizer rates, the potential savings in nitrogen and phosphate are estimated to be 5.1 and 6.1 million pounds, respectively. Reduction in fertilizer application rates translates into an average cost savings of \$25.77 per acre, depending on crop and management history. Total potential economic benefit to producers since the program began in 2001 are estimated at \$5.3 million. This analysis does not include the value of environmental benefits.
- Ag producers were educated on a wide variety of topics using a number of different methods. Topics included cotton, soybean, grain sorghum, corn, sesame, sunflower and guar production; conservation tillage; risk management; fertility management; marketing and many others. Methods included field days, educational meetings and publications. These included: Cotton Pre-Plant Conference, Grain Sorghum, Corn and Sunflower Field Day, Cotton and Sesame Field Day, Sugarcane Field Day and a Fall Corn Field Day. Research demonstrations conducted on producer farms are used to collect an unbiased source of performance data that is used by growers to help determine the most profitable varieties to select for this area. New efforts to increase producer profits included conducting an irrigated guar hybrid result demonstration. Interpretation efforts.

Future Plans

Agent will continue to work with neighboring County Agents in offering programs for producers to increase knowledge in techniques/practices that can increase profit in crop production.

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Output Programs for Willacy County

2014 Rio Grande Valley Beef Development Program

Relevance

Beef producers can improve their herd or the herds of their customers through more rigid sire selection. Replacement heifers will perform to higher levels when in optimum body condition. Beef producers want to increase the value of bulls by collecting feedlot performance data and carcass characteristics.

Response

Texas A&M Agrilife Extension conducted an official 112 day bull gain test and a 126 day heifer development program. Numerous data are collected on all animals including: initial and final weights, average daily gain, body condition score, scrotal circumference, sheath score, reproductive tract score, pelvic area measurements, hip height and ultra-sound measurement of backfat thickness and ribeye area. All data is provided to consignors.

Results

A total of 4 group methods resulted in a total of 99 contact hours of education. A bull gain test and heifer development program has been conducted each year from 1998 through 2014. Participants indicate a positive economic benefit to their beef cattle operations as a result of their participation.

Future Plans

In cooperation with the Rio Grande Valley Beef Improvement Association, plans are to continue the program and perhaps consider marketing alternatives for participants. Another future possibility will be to offer an artificial insemination program for heifers.

2014 Willacy County General ANR Contacts

Willacy County Agriculture plan provided a number of programs for the producers of Willacy County. Programs consisted of the following:

- Site Visits
- Individual Consultations
- Willacy County Farm Bill Training
- Offering CEU's at events/programs

2014 Willacy County General ANR Plan

This plan was conducted to assist landowners and home owners in the county with horticulture questions.

Relevance

Due to our geographical location, and distance from nurseries and landscaping maintenance companies, numerous questions are fielded by the County Extension Agent for the Clientele of Willacy County.

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Response

The Agent assisted landowners and home owners by answering questions via telephone, office visits, and making numerous site visits in order to assist clientele with questions on trees, shrubs, lawns, and insects. Agent was able to assist individuals with numerous problems, many of which were caused by drought. Agent conducted Private applicator training, in order to assist both homeowners and producers with the need for gaining a private applicator license to assist them in purchasing the needed herbicides to maintain their desired botanicals. Agent offers opportunities for individual to attend CEU trainings Two Time a year to assist licensed individuals with their needed credits.

Future Plans

Agent will continue to offer private applicator trainings, along with CEU opportunities in the County. Site visits and phone calls will be answered in order to assist clientele with problems as they arise.

Family and Consumer Sciences

2014 Willacy County Friend to Friend Event

The *Friend to Friend* program's purpose is to encourage women to get regular mammograms and Pap tests for the early detection of breast and cervical cancer, when the disease is most curable.

Relevance

- Regular screening significantly increases the likelihood of finding cancer early, when treatment is more often successful.
- Women living in rural areas of Texas are less likely than their urban counterparts to have had a mammogram or Pap test within the past two years.
- Mortality is higher for rural women because of later diagnosis

Response

- This project's goal is to decrease breast and cervical cancer morbidity and mortality for women living in rural Texas counties by improving screening rates and early detection of cancer.
- Funding was applied for and awarded by the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT) to fund screenings and transportation to uninsured and underserved women in need of screening services.
- The county Extension agent, regional cancer prevention specialist, and patient navigators plan and implement a *Friend to Friend* event. Women attending are given the opportunity to sign a commitment card to obtain a mammogram and/or Pap test within the next year and the option to complete a help request form for assistance in obtaining screening services.

Results

- *Friend to Friend* was implemented in 44 Texas counties in 2014.
- 102 women attended the *Friend to Friend* events on September 17, 2014 at the United Methodist Church in Raymondville, Texas.
- 15 total volunteers assisted at party/events.
- Other Healthcare Provider and a Breast Cancer survivor urged women to obtain a mammogram/Pap screening at the events.
- At the end of the event 93% of women, aged 40 or over, correctly identified the need for a mammogram screening every year.
- 99 Women requested help to navigate screening and diagnostic services.
- Two Clinical sites for screenings, diagnostics, radiologists and lab services were contracted including the following:
 - Harlingen OB/GYN (Cameron)
 - Valley Baptist Medical Center – Breast Center
- 162 Pap screenings and diagnostics were paid for through CPRIT funds.
- 131 Mammogram screenings and diagnostics were paid for through CPRIT funds.
- 3 Women were referred to other available sources for Breast and Cervical screenings and diagnostics.

Family and Consumer Sciences

Future Plans

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Willacy County will attempt to organize another Friend to Friend event for the residence of Willacy County.

4-H and Youth Development

Outcome Programs for Willacy County

2014 Willacy County “Keys to the Courthouse”

Relevance

The “Keys to the Courthouse: A Curriculum Enrichment Program for Youth,” is a 124 page leadership-oriented publication on county government produced through a partnership between the Texas Association of Counties, the County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas and the VG Young Institute. The program features five lessons with associated age-appropriate (7th and 12th grade) classroom and research activities. Each lesson includes information compatible with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills. Included in the curriculum is a DVD which includes videos on the roles of primary offices in the courthouse as well as a poster of the Texas counties for displaying in the classroom. The specific objectives of the Keys to the Courthouse are:

- Identify the functions of county government.
- Understand mandates set forth by state and federal government that county government must adhere to.
- Understand the auxiliary services provided by county governments.
- Understand how to access county services provided.
- Identify the limits of county law enforcement.
- Understanding the participant’s part in keeping their county safe.
- Understand the importance of the election process.
- Explore the process of becoming a candidate for county office.
- Identify the sources of income for county government.

Response

The goal of implementing “Keys to the Courthouse: A Curriculum Enrichment Program for Youth” is to give youth an opportunity to learn more about their county government and the services it provides to the citizens. The knowledge gained through this curriculum experience will empower today’s youth to better use county government services when they are adults.

Results

We measured the level of understanding with seven statements. The participants measured their own level of understanding before and after program by marking between a 1 through 4 scale, with 1 being no understanding and 4 being a high level of understanding.

- All participants indicated on the retrospective post that the knowledge they had on the subject had increased from before participating in the Keys to the Courthouse curriculum.
- All of the measurables for the knowledge gained saw an increase on the scale.

We also measured behavior change from the program with 4 statements. The participant would respond to each statement with a yes/no/unsure.

- 7 of the 8 participants indicated that they have a better appreciation for helping keep Willacy County safe.
- 1 of the participants indicated that they have or plan to be a stronger advocate on issues affecting Willacy County and its citizens.
- 5 of the participants indicated that they have or plan to be a stronger influence to others in educating them on the roles of county government.

4-H and Youth Development

Future Plans

Agent will continue to work with the Willacy County 4-H Council to educate them on the importance of county government in their daily lives and how issues may affect them.

2014 One Day 4-H In Willacy County

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. 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.

Response

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.

The specific objectives of one day 4-H are:

- Provide opportunities for youth to perform community service projects in their individual communities and counties based on their identified needs.
- Provide opportunities for participants to learn about social and community issues and develop ways of resolving those issues.
- Provide opportunities for participants to learn from other team members.
- Promote teamwork.
- Give participants opportunities to work in a strong youth-adult partnership.
- Provide leadership opportunities.
- Give 4-H members the opportunity to participate in a new, exciting event that promotes 4-H.

Results

Of the 27 4-H members who participated in the One day 4-H Event only 14 turned in an evaluation of which 8 were girls and 6 were boys, ages ranged from 10-18 and older. The majority of the participants lived in on a farm or a ranch and 6 of them were of Hispanic descent.

- We measured the participant's level of understanding and behavior changes with a retrospective post-test. Level of Understanding: These were measured using a 1 through 4 scale, with 1 being no understanding at all and 4 being a high level of understanding
 - On the first indicator to measure the "level of understanding of issues affecting the community/county" the participants averaged a 3.07 on the scale before the event and a 4.0 after the event. This is a 0.93 change from before to after which translates to a 30.9% increase in understanding on this indicator.
 - The second indicator to measure the "knowledge of other resources within their community/county who can assist citizens with issues and/or in the time of need" the participants averaged a 3.28 before and a 3.71 after on the scale. This is a 0.43 change in their level of understanding which is a 14.3% increase.
 - On the third indicator of "knowledge of how to organize and plan a community/county-wide function that involves adults as well as other community organizations" average was a 3.0 before and a 3.78 after on the scale. This is a 0.78 change in their level of understanding which is a 26.1% increase.

4-H and Youth Development

- Behavior Indicators: This was measure by asking for a yes/no/unsure response to the statements on the evaluation.
 - The first statement “I have a more positive feeling about the community service project I conducted” had everyone respond with a yes.
 - The second statement “I have a better appreciation of the community they live in as a result of participating” had 13 participants respond with a yes and one was unsure.
 - The third statement “I will be more comfortable working in a team” had all 14participants respond with a yes. The fourth statement “I will be more of an influence on their community because of their project” had the same number responses as the third statement.

Future Plans

We plan to continue to do the One Day 4-H event as an annual event. The 4-H club members will decide what kind of event they would like to do next year.

4-H and Youth Development

Output Programs for Willacy County

2014 Kids & Kows & More Willacy County

Relevance

Today's youth are very far removed from production agriculture, many do not understand the importance of the food and fiber industry and how it impacts our daily lives. Therefore, a program was established partnering the Willacy County Farm Bureau, Cooperative Extension Program (PVAMU) and Texas AgriLife Extension Service to address this need. More specifically, this program was established to educate the teachers, and youth about the value of agriculture in Willacy County.

Response

As a result of this concern, Willacy County Farm Bureau, and the Willacy County Extension office developed a youth Agriculture Literacy Program entitled "Kids & Kows & More". The program targeted 4th grade students from all the elementary schools in Willacy County. This educational event provided the following educational components: Educational material to teachers (Farm Bureau Ag in the Classroom Curriculum), Ag Field Day for students to acquire hands knowledge about the food & fiber industry, and a teacher evaluation.

The following educational activities were organized to achieve the Kids & Kows & More program objectives.

- Worked with school counselors, representing each of the elementary school campuses, to select topics for the agriculture literacy field day, set up schedule for the event, and assist with the development of the teacher evaluation instruments.
- Contacted Texas Farm Bureau Representatives to acquire curriculum for teachers. The name of the curriculum is Agriculture in the 21st Century. Curriculum was distributed to all teachers attending in the form of a CD and many educational material handouts of individual presentations were also provided to teachers.
- Established a Youth Ag Literacy Task Force to meet and plan youth field day event at the Willacy County Fairgrounds. Group identified speakers for the event, secured sponsorships and assisted in distributing and collecting evaluation forms.
- Agent hosted the first annual one day field day event called "Kids & Kows & More Willacy County". Agents worked on gathering sponsors, volunteers, and speakers and other individuals that made this event possible.
- Agents compiled summary of agriculture literacy program based on the results of the teacher evaluations that were collected from each of the participating teachers

Results

A two page teacher evaluation was administered to the participating teachers. This evaluation was developed with input from several school counselors. The strategy was used to determine the level of knowledge youth acquired through this educational event. A total of 15 teacher evaluations were used to determine the effectiveness of this program.

4-H and Youth Development

A total of 187 4th grade students from 3 Willacy County Elementary schools and three school districts participated in this event. The scale of responses for these statements was defined as 1 = Poor, 2 = Fair, 3 = Good, 4 = Excellent. Based on this evaluation, 91.8 % of all respondents strongly agreed that the students acquired an increased knowledge and appreciation for agriculture. 92 % increased their knowledge of where their food comes from. 92 % of all respondents (teachers) agreed that they too gained knowledge about the different commodities that were represented at this educational program. Furthermore, 88 % agreed to use the provided curriculum and incorporate it in their school educational activities.

Future Plans

This program did appear to build knowledge and change perceptions concerning agriculture and the environment. Teacher responses indicate that their students have a better appreciation for agriculture, food commodities, agriculture safety and water. This program will continue next year with the support of the Willacy County Farm Bureau

2014 Willacy County Youth ANR and Livestock

4-H ANR projects are critically important to the youth of Texas. Livestock projects, Science of Ag Programs, soil, grass, and entomology judging and ID are all important programs.

Relevance

In 2000 there were over 75,000 county livestock show entries for cattle, swine, meat goats and sheep (Coufal, 2006) one half of those entries were 4-H. There have been six major benefits identified as a result of exhibiting livestock: 1. social relations; 2) character; 3) family; 4) competition; 5) learning new cultures and environments; and 6) helping finance the youth's higher education. Parents of youth suggest that life skills are enhanced by raising a 4-H livestock project. The longer youth are engaged in the project they are more likely to develop life skills (Boleman, 2003).

Response

In support of the Youth ANR Livestock Plan the Willacy County AgriLife Extension office along with volunteers planed clinics, conducted project visits and advised 4-H Families at stock shows. The CEA also served as Chairman for Willacy County State Steer & heifer Validation and served as a committee member on Willacy County State Swine/Sheep/Goat Validation Committees. The CEA also served as an advisor/4-H liaison to the Willacy County Fair Board of directors.

Some of the major activities under this plan are as follow:

- Beef Showmanship Clinic
 - Volunteers organized a Beef cattle Showmanship clinic and field day. Attendees learned how to clip cattle, feeding strategies and showing techniques. Attendees were then able to show off their showmanship abilities in age group showmanship classes. Winners were awarded champion buckles.
- Quality Assurance Clinic
 - In support of the Willacy County fair emphasis on quality assurance, a quality assurance clinic was held. CEA covered Feeds and feed additives, Medications and wormers, withdraw period, injection sites and techniques. Attendees were able to practice injection techniques with bananas.

Future Plans

4-H and Youth Development

Willacy County AgriLife Extension will continue to support 4-H youth involvement in Agriculture/Natural Resources and Livestock projects. We will continue to offer clinics/trainings and keeping them informed on rules, issues and contests.

2014 Willacy County 4-H Program Administration

Relevance

The management of the 4-H Program in tells much consideration to details, organizing volunteers, and delegating job responsibilities to individuals that can follow through with the given tasks.

Response

This year's management of the 4-H program consisted of numerous activities that included: Monthly newsletters, news articles, news releases, marketing events, checking youth's eligibility, livestock show committee meetings, project group meetings, fundraising, and most importantly interpreting events to key stake holders. Willacy County AgriLIFE Extension meets with Willacy County 4-H Council regularly in order to gather input on upcoming events such as awards night, club meeting, county events, fundraising opportunities. Willacy County Council meets in order to plan events such as the awards night.

Some of the major activities under this plan are as follow

- Photography
 - In support of the Willacy County Photography Project, a Photography workshop was held. Topics covered consisted of; parts of a camera, what makes a good picture and mounting/framing photo of competition. This project appears to be gaining popularity amongst 4-H members.
- Method Demonstration
 - In support of 4-H members who would be conducting Method Demonstration at County and District Roundup, CEA conducted a 2 group training teaching 4-H members and parents what a method demonstration is, what goes in it, and how to present info. CEA followed up the 2 group trainings with one on one work with three teams. Willacy County 4-H had three teams advance to District Roundup where the two Int. team both won their division and ended up winning 1st and 2nd in the sweepstakes competition which is given to the best presentation for the age group. The one senior team that competed at District was awarded 1st place in their division and took home 1st place honors in the sweepstakes competition. At State 4-H Roundup the senior team competed in the largest method demonstration group against 23 other teams. After a long day the Willacy County 4-H Senior method demonstration team was awarded 2nd place.
- Record Books
 - Conducted one group training at which CEA taught 4-H members parts of a record book, how to form the story, and how to organize the record book. Provided more one on one training, for 4-H members who are interested in organizing a record book for submission for county and district competition. This year Willacy County had 6 Record Books advance to District competition. All the record books were very competitive at district and one of the Willacy County books won its category. That record book went on to compete at state and also was awarded 1st place honors at the state competition.
- Livestock Judging

4-H and Youth Development

- In support of the Willacy County 4-H members who wanted to participate in livestock judging we held numerous workouts on live animals whenever/wherever we could get together. At these workouts we would practice judging classes and then have the 4-H members give their reasons for placing them the way that they did. This year we took one Intermediate team and one senior individual to District competition. The Intermediate team was awarded 1st place at District and had two team members place in the top five individually. The senior individual also had a great day at district as she was awarded 1st place high point individual and advance to State roundup to represent District 12.

Results

The Willacy County 4-H Council members have taken on more leadership roles in their clubs, and are conducting more effective club meetings due to the trainings and encouragement they have received from volunteers and extension staff.

Leadership opportunities were marketed through the Willacy County 4-H Newsletter, giving youth the opportunity to take part in such programs. As a result 7 youth 4-H members attended District 12 4-H Leadership Lab, and 2 more youth served as voting delegates at District 12 4-H Election Convention.

Future Plans

Willacy County AgriLIFE Extension would like to continue to strengthen the Willacy County 4-H Council and give them the tools to make them a productive group that thrives to make the best better. The Willacy County Extension office will continue marketing and interpreting highlight of programs in the county. Volunteer involvement will continue to grow, as our ever-changing responses to emerging issues emerge.

Community Economic Development

Outcome Programs for Willacy County

2014 Willacy County BID Certification Program

Relevance

Underserved business owners have struggled for many years to learn of programs and opportunities that can assist them by increasing profits for their business by competing with bigger competitors. Willacy County has a very low number of vendors that have been active in becoming (HUB Certified). The purpose of the initiative is to serve as a model and increase minority purchasing and procurement numbers and increase economic outcomes for minority entrepreneurs in Willacy County

Response

Participants will participate in intensive educational trainings that will follow them to become certified vendors that will learn and take advantage of small business opportunities in contracting. The participants will try to increase sales to their businesses by the end of 2014 year and propel their business by engaging in this certification program toward a path of solid business growth, increased employment, and sustainable business practices.

Program Goals

Among lessons taught, participants attended weekly classes for a one month period and learned about; Meeting buyer who are looking for local contracts, customer service, exploring contracts, bids, negotiations, estimate supplies, financing, line of credit, marketing, creating a business plan, record keeping, bookkeeping, accounting, filing taxes, employee standards, pricing strategies, and contracting. Activities that business owners participated in also included;

- Researched business ideas
- Develop a business plan with a detailed and complete budget
- Orally presented their business plan
- Develop personal skills and workplace competencies
- Met with insurance agent and learned about insurance policies
- Submit a contract
- Developed an elevator speech for marketing business

Results

Twelve Willacy County small business owners participated in intensive educational trainings that allowed them to become certified vendors that taught them how to take advantage of small business opportunities in contracting. Participants increased knowledge and sales activity for under-performing certified minority owned businesses.

Evaluation of the Willacy County BID Certification Program had a high impact of participation considering the available businesses within the county. A similar program had been implemented before by other business agencies but had a very poor response in attendance. With aggressive support with the Raymondville Chamber of Commerce and many hours of marketing, I was able to secure a good response of businesses to participate. Businesses that in rolled in program consisted of; restaurant, construction, produce company, real estate, meat packaging company and other self-owned businesses. This program had a very strong impact on many of the

Community Economic Development

teaching materials needed to secure a business successfully. Over 60% of the participants were able to provide some type of marketing strategy to promote their business which included a television commercial, radio commercial and several local magazine articles.

Nine of the twelve participants (97%) showed they have the necessary skills needed to become a successful business owner. A total of (98%) of the participants showed that they are now familiar with the bid process. Only (2%) showed an interest of submitting a bid to the state. Through a post test program survey, (100%) of participants understand the qualifications for the State of Texas Historically Underutilized Business certification. Other measures of knowledge gained collected include:

- Importance of creditor reports (89%)
- Developed a Business Plan a (92%)
- Encouraged them to invest in Insurance (98%)
- Financial Resource Opportunities

Collaborators:

Efforts between the Raymondville Economic Development Council, Raymondville Chamber of Commerce, The University of Texas Pan American Business Development & Innovation Group/PTAC were the main collaborators of this program.

Summary

Participants did not submit for large bid contracts. The size of production they operate in Willacy County is limited to a smaller scale business. Business owners met with local school districts and other local businesses at a “Meet the Buyer Workshop” to fill out vendor applications for the upcoming year. I have been meeting continuously with participants and providing assistance in educational training about.

Community Economic Development

Output Programs for Willacy County

2014 Willacy County Sustainable Community Garden

Relevance:

Community gardens provide access to traditional produce or nutritionally rich foods that may otherwise be unavailable to low-income families and individuals. Community gardens allow families and individuals, without land of their own, the opportunity to grow food on their own to supply their family. Oftentimes gardens take advantage of the experiential knowledge of elders to produce a significant amount of food for the household. Families will learn how to plant a garden and learn economic values that will help their family financially.

Response:

I worked with Health People of Willacy County organization, Raymondville Independent School District, Raymondville Chamber of Commerce, local church groups, housing groups, and other individuals to improve nutritional, health and economic outcomes for limited resource communities, families, and individuals. Measures that were established in this project included monthly planning meetings, community clean-up of garden, farmer's market, establish funding opportunities, and educational programming to discuss gardening practices and small business development opportunities for both youth and adults.

Program Goals

Our goal was to build on community support to educate families the importance of eating healthy. We built relations with key stakeholders to teach both youth and adults about growing a garden and learning the process of developing a business by selling what they produce.

Actions that have been conducted throughout the year include:

- The Community Garden project has been a vision for many residents in and around Raymondville, Texas. I have been working with committee volunteer of the Healthy People of Willacy County to move on the progress of getting water to donated project sight to irrigate the land. Cultivation of the one acre plot has been maintained by volunteers. Local businesses have donated materials for the garden. I have worked with city officials to donate funds toward the installation of a water meter. We held a ground breaking ceremony with city officials to secure their support of the project.
- We have been able to develop committee support by raising funds. On July 14, the Healthy People of Willacy County Coalition task group hosted a 5K run to fundraise for community garden. We raised over \$1,000 from this event.
- An estimated budget analysis for the community garden is as followed; we are looking at total expense to be around \$700 for the water line and irrigation we will install. We need to install a perimeter fence to be placed around the area which will cost about \$700. I have applied for several grant opportunities.
- Committee members of the Healthy People of Willacy County Coalition were able to organize a local Community Garden Farmers Market made of local residents to raising awareness of project and to assist in raising funds. A town planning meeting took place on May 29, 2014 to sign up membership towards the garden.

Community Economic Development

- I applied for several grant opportunities such as the Learn, Grow, Eat & Go program hosted by Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service which will provide this program with a curriculum and financial support and the South Region Program Enhancement Grant.

Results:

As project leader for the community gardening, I see that the project is finally moving ahead after many hurdles we have faced. An evaluation of the Willacy County Community Garden program was provided to members and volunteers that have had been active with the project. A total of 13 people participated in a survey to reflect on the programs objectives and goals to be carried out. 100% of participants showed they have the need to become more active and provide good nutritious food for their family. 94% of participants said they are willing to be educated on the skills needed to become entrepreneurs and want to establish a farmers market in the area. 96% said they will be active in participating in a local farmers market. 98% of teachers that were asked will be active in providing lecture to students on community gardens and relations to entrepreneurship.

Collaborators:

This program was a collaborative effort between the City of Raymondville and local volunteers.

Summary:

Through the support of the community, we continue to build on the growth of this project. We are hoping to have our first seed on the grown by the first of February 2015. Our intensions were to have this project done by the fall of 2014 but we were not able to meet this goal due to funding support.

2014 Willacy County Community & Economic Development

Relevance

Community development programming targets the development of individual abilities and community support for creating and growing businesses, jobs, wealth, income, job preparedness, career development, understanding community capacity and resources, community infrastructure, etc. Through these efforts and support of steak holders, communities will improve the well-being of its citizens.

Response

Through the support of volunteers and members of the program area committee, the Cooperative Extension Program has worked on identifying issues and provided educational programs in community and economic development to enhance the quality of life for the residents in Willacy County. A series of educational workshops, one-on-one sessions, and educational programs have been provided to teach individuals and businesses the knowledge and skills needed for building sustainable communities and develop new community leaders that can effectively lead organizations to increase economic growth. These skills will aid by increasing their business production, increase standards of living, increase disposable income, and increase jobs within the community.

Community Economic Development

The following educational activities were organized by the effort of volunteers and members of the Willacy County program area committee to achieve the objective.

- I participated in a **Community Economic Summit** community project sponsored by the City of Raymondville to plan short, mid and long term priorities for the community. The program brought together city, state, local elected officials along with government agencies to learn of city needs. As a result, I served on several group committees. I provided support on small business development and agriculture programs. I incorporated the vision of the Raymondville Community Economic Summit Project within my plans.
- I assisted local **Heritage Ranch Agribusiness Family** by bringing financial support into their farm. This business provides a tour of families' sustainable ranch to learn about the natural resource environment and how it is used. I have assisted family by offering business ideas and opportunities to grow financially.
- I assisted client by establishing a **Goat Feedlot Operation Business** in Willacy County. Activities consisted of; setting appointments with local goat vendors to obtain a market, and applying for grant opportunities which they received a \$10,000 grant from the Young Farmers Grant from Texas Department of Agriculture. This will create a huge milestone opportunity for other goat ranchers.
- As chairman of the RGV Livestock Show's Open Heifer Pen Show I have assisted these business owners in marketing their business. The event provides an opportunity for livestock owners to exhibit breeding heifers to compete and showcase their cattle to other potential buyers. Cattle owners are seeking better opportunities to increase profit and production.
- I hosted a **Record Book & Loan Training Workshop** in Raymondville, TX to help business owners and home owners learn of a more productive system to record data. Several attendees of the program took interest to apply for USDA loans such as direct loans, guarantee loans, and micro loans.
- I hosted a home owners program in 2013 which led me to meet a resident who lost their home to Hurricane Dolly. I met with home owner Victoria Orellana several times throughout the 2014 year to assist in working on **application with FEMA**. As of today, they demolished entire home and moved into a four bedroom home on 1290 N. 1st Street. Estimated cost in rebuilding is about \$140,000.
- I hosted two value added **Goat Workshops** to entire Rio Grande Valley region to give potential small land owner an reasonable opportunity to invest in business. These programs allowed for new innovating business owners to start small and learn about USDA assistance such as loans and other financial assistance.
- I collaborating with the **East Foundation, El Sauz Division** located in South Texas by gathering educational material in natural resources to teach over 1,000 youth from the IDEA Academy Schools located in the Rio Grande Valley about the history of South Texas ranching at a field day event. I talked to students the importance of having an education.
- I assisted in the organization of the **Kids & Kows & More Willacy County**. This event thought 4th grade students the concept about our agriculture commodities in our area and where they come from. We taught 300 students about agriculture entrepreneurs and career opportunities. We explained how jobs tie into universities where they can attend to further their education in these areas.
- I collaborated with Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service in hosting the **Women's Cancer Awareness Program** in Raymondville, TX. Over 90 women participants were in attendance at this three hour event. Speakers talked about self screening and services. A local surviving cancer participant spoke about her cancer experience.

Community Economic Development

- I collaborated with USDA Farm Service Agency to conduct a **2014 Farm Bill Workshop** for Willacy County agriculture producers. This program was developed to assist producers by educating them more about local commodity crop issues and concerns towards farm bill.

Collaborators. The following groups assisted with resources to make this program possible:

- Raymondville Chamber of Commerce
- Raymondville Economic Development Council
- Healthy People of Willacy County Coalition
- Local Businesses/Coalition Groups
- USDA Farm Service Agency

Summary

Through the support and guidance of agencies involved we were able to provide the necessary educational programs for participants to apply skills and knowledge gained to better their financial goals. 97% of participants showed an increase of knowledge gained in support of programing. We will continue to address community's interests with the support of the program area committee.

Resource Development

Willacy County Junior Livestock Show:

The 2013 Willacy County Junior Livestock Show generated over \$277,000 for the youth of Willacy County. Youth had the opportunity to sell show projects at the conclusion of the show. Funds were generated from donors in and around Willacy County.

Willacy County Beef Syndicate Dinner:

Willacy County 4-H has traditionally held a brisket plate sale Two Weeks prior to the Willacy County Fair. This year there were over 2400 plates sold which grossed over \$24,000 and netted nearly \$12,000 in profits thanks to donors and volunteers working together.

Willacy County Fair Raffle:

The Willacy County Fair Raffle generated \$10,000 for the Willacy County Fair. More than \$1,500 in donations was received to help offset the cost of the prizes

Extension Education in Willacy County

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