Extension Education in Hidalgo County

Making a difference 2009

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
AgriLife Extension 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. AgriLife 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 program specialists, professional educators, and some 98,000 trained volunteers, the Texas AgriLife Extension Service 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 AgriLife Extension’s 4-H and youth development programs.

Texans turn to AgriLife 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.

These are just a few highlights of AgriLife Extension’s impacts on Hidalgo County and its people:

**Hidalgo County – Summary of Educational Contacts**

- ★ Educational Programs Conducted via Group Methods- 947
- ★ Total Contact Hours at Educational Programs Conducted via Group Methods- 138,868
- ★ 4-H Clubs- 24
- ★ 4-H Members- 646
- ★ 4-H Leaders- 137
- ★ Youth Curriculum Enrichment Participants- 14,745
- ★ Youth Special Interest Participants- 7,783
- ★ Master Volunteers- 111
- ★ Extension Education Club Members- 92
- ★ Leadership Advisory Board Members- 25
- ★ Committee/Task Force Members- 106
- ★ Office Contacts- 1470
- ★ Site Contacts- 2,996
- ★ Phone Calls- 3,902
- ★ Mail/E-Mail Contacts- 7,955
2009 Rio Grande Valley Nutrient Management Program

Developed by Brad Cowan, County Extension Agent- Agriculture and ag agents in Cameron, Willacy and Starr Counties

Relevance: Ag producers can save dollars, insure more consistent crop yields & crop quality and prevent environmental contamination by using best management practices such as soil testing, the use of nutrient plans for fertilizing, fertility timing and placement, use of crop physiology information, nutrient and irrigation interactions and related practices. These scientifically proven practices needs to be utilized to a higher degree.

Response: A 4-county soil testing program has been conducted in the fall-winter of 2001 through 2008 in the Rio Grande Valley Region of Texas. Counties involved in this program were Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr and Willacy.

Results: Soil testing is an extremely important best management practice in agricultural production systems. As market conditions continue to fluctuate and fertilizer prices remain high, managing input costs will become increasingly critical. In addition, increasing focus on environmental pollution with nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus requires that producers use good management to protect water resources and prevent more stringent regulation.

This 4-county soil testing program generated a total of 3,746 samples representing 156,389 acres. Projected fertilizer savings based on soil test were an estimated 3,959,736 pounds of nitrogen and 4,714,078 pounds of phosphate compared to rates proposed before testing. This management practice provided not only environmental benefits by reducing nutrient loading to the soil and potentially to water resources, but also created the opportunity for an economic impact estimated at $4,031,487 in fertilizer cost savings.

A total of 3 group methods resulted in a total of 158 contact hours of education. Important collaborators: Rio Farms, sugar mill, Valley Ag Agents, Dr. Mark McFarland, Dr. Tony Provin, Cecilia Wagner, Geraldo Tapia, Arroyo Colorado Ag Issues Committee, NRCS, TSSWCB and many others.

This program received the Governor’s Environmental Excellence Conservation Tillage Field Award, Agriculture Division. I coordinated with a media firm and Day at McCook TCEQ to put together a video tape presentation that was used as part of the awards ceremony held at a banquet in Austin. In addition, we were able to attend sessions of both the state Senate and House of Representatives where proclamations were passed and had photos taken with Governor Perry.

Future Plans: Plan to continue this program contingent upon funding and crops committee approval
2009 Rio Grande Valley Beef Development Program

Developed by Brad Cowan, County Extension Agent- Agriculture and ag agents in Cameron, Willacy and Starr Counties

**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. A goal is to increase the value of bulls by collecting feedlot performance data and carcass characteristics. Increasing the value of heifers through heifer development program

**Response:** Conduct a bull gain test and heifer development program. Conducted field day at end of the gain test. Educational program included presentation of awards, speakers on timely topics, networking time for producers.
Rio Grande Valley Beef Cattle Short Course conducted to provide local producers timely information on the Fever Tick and beef cattle production and management.

**Results:** A total of 8 group methods resulted in a total of 375 contact hours of education. 87 bulls and 102 heifers were placed in the program by cattlemen from throughout south Texas. 100 percent of respondents surveyed said that the program added value to their operation.

**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 include artificial insemination program in the future.

2009 Rio Grande Valley Animal Issues Committee

Developed by Brad Cowan, County Extension Agent- Agriculture and ag agent in Cameron County

**Relevance:** RGV Animal Issues Committee is developing a plan to cover emergencies regarding animal issues.

**Response:** A total of 3 group methods resulted in a total of 81 contact hours of education. Extension is taking an active role in this process by assisting in getting the committee organized, serving on the committee and assisting in writing certain sections of the plan.
Provided educational materials to swine producers when the swine flu outbreak occurred. Also provided training to secretaries, agents and BLT aides. Procured and installed hand sanitizers at key points around the office.

**Results:** Numerous meetings have been held to discuss, network, explore and further develop a plan that will meet the needs of this region in times of emergency.

**Future Plans:** The plan is still being developed
2009 Rio Grande Valley Pesticide Safety Program

Developed by Brad Cowan, County Extension Agent- Agriculture and ag agent in Cameron County

**Relevance:** Ag producers have a need to obtain and maintain a pesticide license issued by Texas Department of Agriculture in order to use crop protection chemicals. Extension provides educational role in this process. Safety training is provided for those needing to obtain a license. Continuing education is also provided to local producers.

**Response:** Educational training events were conducted to meet statutory requirements for producers to obtain a license. Continuing education is also be provided.

**Results:** A total of 6 group methods resulted in a total of 654 contact hours of education. Four Pesticide Safety Trainings where conducted in 2009. 97 percent (28 of 29) of the 29 students received a passing grade on the exam administered by the Texas Department of Agriculture. The average grade for all students was 86.

Numerous continuing education credits were provided to ag producers during the course of the year at almost every educational meeting conducted.

**Future Plans:** This effort will continue in the future

2009 Hidalgo County Crop Production Program

Developed by Brad Cowan, County Extension Agent- Agriculture

**Relevance:** 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 be investigated such as soybeans and sesame.

**Response:** Row crop producers gain knowledge which gives them the information necessary to become more efficient and economically sustainable.

**Results:** A total of 21 group methods resulted in 2,292 contact hours of education were conducted on a wide variety of topics using a number of different methods. Topics included cotton production, soybean production, farm bill programs, conservation tillage, and many others.

Methods included field days, result demonstrations conducted on producer farms, meetings and publications.

Conservation Tillage Field Day- McCook, Cotton Pre-Plant
Conference, New Farm Bill Information Meeting, Grape Field Day, Grain Sorghum and Soybean Field Day, Cotton Field Day, Organic Transition EQIP Meeting, Sugarcane Field Day, Soybean Field Day, Meeting of Producers with State FSA Director

Future Plans: Plans for 2010 include establishing a soybean variety trial with the assistance of Dr. James Grichar, Research Scientist

2009 Hidalgo County Agriculture Water Conservation Program

Developed by Brad Cowan, County Extension Agent- Agriculture

Relevance: Water conservation in production agriculture continues to be a priority issue for this area due to tight irrigation supplies available from the Rio Grande River.

Response: Educational programs and result demonstrations were used to provide information to end users

Results: A total of 7 group methods resulted in a total of 715 contact hours of education. Cooperating with RGBI and Arroyo Colorado planning groups. Reaching master gardeners with water conservation in the landscape information. Result demonstrations being used to show soil water monitoring techniques. Stressing the interaction of nutrient management and water conservation. I provided training to the Cameron Master Gardeners on turf management that included water conservation.

Future Plans: Continue teaching people about water conservation methods

2009 Rio Grande Valley Financial Planning and Management for Limited Resource Ag Producers

Developed by Vidal Saenz, Extension Agent-Cooperative Extension Program

Relevance: Limited resource ag producers and rural youth in the Rio Grande Valley face numerous challenges in obtaining financial resources through commercial lending institutions. Many of the producers qualify for financing through USDA-Farm Service Agency, but they are not aware of the programs through USDA or are overwhelmed by the paperwork involved in filling out a direct loan application from that agency. A large educational gap exists in the completion of USDA-Farm Service Agency loan applications by ag producers and another promotional gap exists in the dissemination of outreach on the loan programs.

Response: A total of 55 farm families were provided technical assistance in filling out USDA-Farm Service Agency loan requests in 2009. The total amount requested from these families was $6,666,270. The breakdown of the loan requests were as follows: 73% farm operating loans, 10% farm ownership loans and 17% rural
youth loans.

**Results:** Each program participant received a complete analysis of their farming or ranching operation and a complete direct loan request to submit to USDA-Farm Service Agency. 100% of the participants developed a farm business plan, received a six-hour training on production and financial record book keeping and filled out a current farm financial statement.

All program participants were able to submit a complete direct loan application to USDA-Farm Service Agency because all of the obstacles that impeded their full participation in the program were removed. They were also able to save a 2% fee on their loan request by not utilizing the services of a private loan packager. The total amount of money that they saved was $133,325. An average savings of $2,425 per applicant.

**2009 Hidalgo County Earth Kind Environmental Stewardship & Water Conservation Program**

Developed by Barbara Storz, County Extension Agent- Horticulture

**Relevance:** Several issues are critical to the long term health of the environment in Hidalgo County and the area’s ability to support population and industry growth include:

- **Landscape Water Conservation:** Irrigation accounts for up to 60% of total residential water use during summer months.
- **Fertilizer Use in the Landscape:** Improper use of fertilizers increases the risk for surface contamination from nitrogen and phosphorous fertilizers.
- **Chemical Pesticide Use in the Landscape:** The improper use of chemical pesticides increases risk of these materials entering the environment, an issue critically important to the long term health and safety of Hidalgo residents and to wildlife.
- **Landscape Waste Management:** Landscape wastes are a major source of materials entering landfills, an important issue locally and across the state.
- **Landscaping for Energy Conservation:** Conserving energy through use of Earth kind landscaping principles, practices and materials is important to the long term economy and environment of the residents in Hidalgo County and the state of Texas.

**Response:** 49 Adult Educational Programs, reaching 1,618 people, totaling 3,418 contact hours were provided in 2009 by the horticultural agent and Master Gardener volunteers, including educational presentations, tours, demonstrations and a multi-county water conservation event. A native ornamental grass trial was installed at North San Juan Park, in cooperation with Pct. 2 and Texas A & M University - Kingsville, with signs in English and Spanish. 30 articles on Earth Kind principals were published in the Monitor 5 television shows on Earth Kind principals were aired.

46 Master Gardeners donated 6,556 hours of volunteer time to Hidalgo County communities by delivering educational programs, establishing and maintaining demonstration gardens. Master Gardeners translated materials into Spanish and conducted educational programs, including a landscape design class in Spanish. Hidalgo County Master Gardeners were honored by Texas AgriLife Extension at the State Master Gardener Conference with two awards for programing and leadership
Results: Overall evaluations show 96% of respondents thought information was relevant and would recommend their program to others. 46% of respondents attended Extension programs for the first time and 93% anticipate benefitting economically as a direct result of what they learned.

2009 Hidalgo County Grow’n Growers Community Development Program

Developed by Barbara Storz, County Extension Agent- Horticulture

Relevance: The TCFF process identified Community & Economic Development as the number one issue in Texas. Locally, in Hidalgo County, this issue, along with adult education, were identified as community needs. In addition, residents have identified the need for a farmer’s market offering locally grown produce.

Response: A pilot program was developed, in 2007-08 in partnership with County Commissioner, Hector “Tito” Palacios, Hidalgo County Pct 2, that trained 15 Hispanic families to grow organic produce in backyards, improving their consumption of vegetables and their knowledge of nutrition. A Farmer’s Market opened in 2008 with class members/vendors. In 2009 four new families were added to the producer entrepreneurs. Instruction, in Spanish, included organic horticultural practices, food safety, nutrition and health, finance, marketing, business establishment and leadership development were taught in 40 classes and field trips (1,430 contact hours). Master Gardener volunteers, industry personnel and local commercial producers provided programs and grants ($17,000) from Heifer Foundation and City of McAllen-Compost Department, supported the project.

Results: All families improved their knowledge of organic production and adapted organic horticultural practices, improved their incomes by $75.00 to $200.00 (2009) per month during the 7 month market season. 80% of families reported savings on weekly groceries due to garden. Two families have since opened their gardens for weekly vegetable sales, adding $100.00 to $400.00 per month in addition to income from the Farmer’s Market.

Future Plans: Additional partnerships and grants for 2010 add a staff person to assist with marketing efforts, including developing a web page where advance orders can be placed by customers, and a part-time entomologist to assist individual families in identifying and resolving problems with diseases and insects. For 2010, 25 producer families will participate in the Grow’n Growers program and the Farmer’s Market will be held twice monthly.
Supporting Science Education with the Jr. Master Gardener (JMG) Program

Developed by Barbara Storz, County Extension Agent - Horticulture

Response: A week long Teacher Training for 18 educators was held at the Edinburg World Birding Center, in August, 2009, partnering with Texas Parks and Wildlife biologists, where teachers learned how to establish outdoor classrooms and utilize the Jr. Master Gardener curriculum, developed by Texas AgriLife Extension, to improve youth science comprehension. Also provided two JMG workshops for 47 teachers at the Science Teachers Conference in Mercedes.

Additionally, 133 educational sessions, reaching 1,504 youth, were conducted in summer youth camps and schools across Hidalgo County. A traveling exhibit on the Monarch Butterfly, its migration, the native plants that support it, and its life cycle was developed by Master Gardener volunteer, Norma Sanchez, and evaluated by 286 youth at 5 schools.

Results: Evaluations by 286 students showed that 99% of students thought the program was informative and the activity helped them understand metamorphosis and the Monarch migration. Evaluations for Teacher Training indicated that 93% of respondents were mostly or completely satisfied with information and 100% thought material was complete, and relevant. 29% thought they would install a school habitat garden and 33% said they would install a vegetable garden in their school, totaling 62% of the participants. Additionally 69% of teachers said they would utilize the Jr. Master Gardener curriculum in their schools.
2009 District 12 Do Well Be Well in Hidalgo County

Developed by Adelita F. Munoz, County Extension Agent-Family & Consumer Sciences

**Relevance:** Do Well Be Well (DWBW) with Diabetes is an educational program for individuals and families who have type 11 diabetes. The goal of the program is to help participants learn how to manage their diabetes through lessons on self-care and their diet in order to keep their blood glucose in a healthy range that is recommended by the American Diabetes Association. In Hidalgo County 3 out of 5 adults have type 11 diabetes. There are thousands of individuals that have diabetes but do not know because they do not have access to adequate health care therefore never get checked by a health care provider. The elementary schools report that the number of children with type 11 diabetes is increasing rapidly and they feel that parents need to be educated so that they can monitor the entire family’s eating habits. They frequently request assistance in empowering children with nutrition education. It is also known that Diabetes is the fifth leading cause of death in the United States with an estimated 73,000 people dying of the disease annually. Diabetes is also the leading cause of blindness, kidney failure and lower limb amputation. Studies show that people who lose weight and increase physical activity can prevent or delay diabetes.

**Response:** The Hidalgo County FCS Committee recommended that DWBW again be taught throughout the year. In the past there were two classes held annually but the committee felt that it was necessary to increase the number of classes. One of the committee members is the director for the Rio Grande Valley Diabetes Association and she was excited that DWBW would be an ongoing program. Together they formed a coalition of doctors, nurses, diabetes educator and conducted five six DWBW series of lessons and 4 Cooking with Diabetes. There was total of 157 participants.

Partnerships and Collaborators: Walmart provided food for the Cooking with Diabetes Pharmaceutical companies that provided healthy refreshments for all classes McAllen Health Hospital provided facilities Rio Grande Food Bank provided facilities The coalition of doctors that gave of their time to present Businesses that donated door prizes

**Results:** The RGV Diabetes Association conducted a survey after the classes because the participants did not care to fill out the evaluation because it was too long. They would say “the program was excellent. For the first time I learned the importance of checking my blood the way the doctor would tell me. But he never told me why so I didn’t see the importance. Besides the strips are too expensive.” 150 of the participants were able to lower their glucose by an average of 30 points.

140 reported to be checking as many times as they were instructed.
150 reported to be eating by portions and enjoying their meals more. One lady said “now we are not stuffed. We have trained our system to eat what is correct amount and no more.” All were very satisfied with the program. Some wanted to come again to the next class. With the exception of 10 all reported to the telephone surveyors that they were doing at least 5 things different that they had learned in the classes.
All were really motivated by the doctor who told them to celebrate life with Diabetes.
He told them “you are fortunate that you now know what to do and you can choose to do things different and live a quality life or keep on doing as you were doing and cut the quality of life that
you have. It is your choice...and don't think that you will die because you don't. Your organs die one by one and so do you but your funeral is much later...you decide.” All wanted that doctor to be at the meetings every week. In every class the average absences were two to three. There was one class of 40 Caucasian, and 10 Hispanics. All the other classes were all Hispanics. All reported that they will be saving by not having complications or the normal viruses that they all reported to constantly be having.

Many of the participants reported that they were now able to help their children with their meals.

2009 Hidalgo County Better Living for Texans Program

Developed by Adelita F. Munoz, County Extension Agent-Family & Consumer Sciences

Relevance: In Hidalgo County, an estimated 68% have incomes that are 185% of poverty or below; 48% receive food stamp benefits. The unemployment is has hit the double digit and families are having a difficult time making ends meet. Research has shown that individuals who live in poverty have a dietary intake that are not congruent with current recommendations (My Pyramid). This audience, like many, may not recognize their risk for food-borne illness. Stretching resources so food is available throughout the month is also a challenge. Families that had never applied for food assistance in food pantries and food banks are doing it for the first time. Many express the difficulty in making the food power of the Lone Star Card stretch the entire month. At times they also report that they have to throw away food because it has gone bad due to a lack of food safety knowledge.

Response: The Better Living for Texans Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program was initiated in 1995 as a cooperative endeavor among Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Health and Human Services Commission and the Food and Nutrition Services of USDA. During 2009, more than 133,517 Hidalgo County adults and youth participated in the EAT BETTER TO LIVE BETTER series. This program focuses on meal planning, stretching food dollars, and adopting selected behaviors that can reduce the risk of food-borne illness.

Evaluation of the Hidalgo County BLT Program was conducted via the use of a pre, post, and 30 day follow-up survey. This allowed for the collection of data that reflected current behaviors, behaviors were actually adopted. The instrument also allowed for the estimate of changes in out-of-pocket food expenses that may have occurred as a result of their participation in BLT. This report represents 279 adults who participated in the program and completed the pre and post surveys. 131 of these participants completed the pre, post and 30 day follow-up surveys.

Results: 91.4% are Females 8.2% are Males, 97.8% are Hispanics 46.6% have less than a high school education 24.4% have high school or GED 10.4% have some college 11.1% have college degrees 5.0% have graduate degrees. 83.9% are planning meals, shopping with a grocery list, & comparing prices, 90.7% are washing hands with soap and water before and during cooking. Savings for 131 persons from out-of-pocket expenses that completed the survey was $49,982. The program will continue reaching out to families that are on Food Stamps or those that qualify but for some reason cannot get them.
2009 Hidalgo County Parenting Connection

Developed by Adelita F. Munoz, County Extension Agent-Family & Consumer Sciences

**Relevance:** Positive parenting practices play an essential role in children’s development and later life success. Parents are responsible for several key care giving tasks to help ensure that proper physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development occurs for their children. Parenting is affected by many aspects of life including parent characteristics such as personality, cognitive abilities, health, age, and level of education. The children’s characteristics such as temperament, developmental progress, and mental health also play an important role. Family economic resources and the structure of the family: single parent, two-parent, grandparents raising children also have a major role. Educating families about positive parenting practices and healthy family functioning is essential to improving overall child/family health and well-being. School districts in Hidalgo County are struggling with students that lack respect and discipline. Parents report to the school that they don’t know what else to do. They have spanked the young children and they have argued with the adolescents but get no results. The schools agree that the parents desperately need positive parenting skills. Child Protective Services, Juvenile Probation Department all agree that unless parents invest in attending parenting classes nothing will change. FCS Committee Members were well aware of the problem and requested that the agent address the parenting Issue. Members from the BLT Committee asked if there was any possibility of extension addressing parenting classes. 4-H leaders that teach have also indicated the problem and suggested parenting classes in the plans for ‘09.

**Response:** Nine six week Parenting Connection classes were held in the extension office every Thursday evening. A Spanish class was formed when clients said that they did not understand English. A total of 750 participants have attended the 6 two hour classes. 300 participants have attended one shot Parenting Classes in the schools, churches, community centers, and colonias.

**Results:** Clients are very pleased with the classes. They especially enjoy the group dynamics activities, the role play, music and the group discussions. They report that they enjoy that they are not forced to do anything that they are not comfortable with. They have What the word “respect, discipline, rules, enforcing, rewards, communication skills and much more. They report that they are being totally different with their children. They are surprised to learn that the children actually behave better now that they have rules and now that they are spending more time with them. All have said that they will recommend the classes to others. Some have brought relatives with them.

**Future Plans:** The program will continue as long as participants keep registering.

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2009 Master Clothing Volunteer Program
Developed by Adelita F. Munoz, County Extension Agent-Family & Consumer Sciences

**Relevance:** The Master Clothing Volunteer Program aims to develop leadership in women that are willing to learn and share what they learn with others. They are also exploring ways to supplement their small or no income. These women are willing to “do for others if they are trained.” They identified several issues but the main one was to train them in something that they could learn to make and sell.

**Response:** Extension set up weekly training on projects that they had a desire to learn to construct and sell. Some of the projects were clothes, decorative pillow, different styles of purses, different jewelry, fabric book covers, prayer cross pillows, crocheting, beaded belts and accessories, memory blanket/quilts and others.

**Results:** 55 Master Clothing Volunteers have been trained. They have reached 125 other women that are now volunteering. Their income has been supplemented by $450.00-$750.00 monthly. ($75,600) Master Clothing Volunteers constructed 14 round elegant tablecloths to the 4-H Center in Brownwood, TX. Master Clothing Volunteers have constructed small quilts and donated them to an adult Day Care Center. They have also constructed children’s undergarments and have donated them to children in a colonia and to a pre-school.

**Future Plans:** The group will continue to meet on a weekly basis. They have expressed an interest in learning about health topics so that they can share with other women. In particular they are interested in Cultivando La Salud, a cancer awareness program.

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**2009 Hidalgo County Food Manager Certification Program**

Developed by Adelita F. Munoz, County Extension Agent-Family & Consumer Sciences

**Relevance:** School District Cafeteria Employees have to have a State certification to be able to keep their jobs as cafeteria managers and assistants/Helpers. The school districts expect for employees to identify the trainers that will teach the classes on week-ends or at night. The schools have cut back on personnel and cannot afford to let employees out to get their Food Manager Course and certification.

**Response:** Extension identified a volunteer that was able to meet the needs of the school and day care personnel and teach classes at their convenience.

**Results:** 6 Food Manager Classes were held and 75 persons became certified and were able to keep their jobs.(approx.$127,500) 8 Food Handlers Classes were held and 375 Participants attended and were able to renew or receive their Food Handlers Card from the state of Texas( this card will allow them to work in any eating establishment in Texas.($52,500.00)
47 Participants were able to assist in School and church food booths

Participants were pleased that they had their certification for the next three years. They were able to enroll in the course and not take vacation leave. 45 Food Managers were very grateful that they were able to take the class in Spanish. Their knowledge of the Food Safety Rules on temperatures, bacteria, storage, and purchasing was enhanced.

2009 Hidalgo County Elder Care

Developed by Adelita F. Munoz, County Extension Agent-Family & Consumer Sciences

Relevance: Seniors are at high risk for identity theft and because of their limited English proficiency they do not understand the new rules on Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security. They lack the understanding of their diabetic diets, and other instructions that health providers provide for them.

Response: Texas AgriLife partnered with the Congressmen Hinojosa and Cuellar to plan and host two Senior Summit Events.

Results: 25 Seniors were empowered with knowledge on identity theft, Medicare, Medicaid, diabetes, nutrition, and Social Security. A healthy lunch was served and many gift cards were given as door prizes. All were very grateful that they had attended the event. Some seniors were surprised to hear that they should never give their bank id numbers and other important information. There were booths checking blood glucose, vision, cholesterol, skin cancer, and blood pressure. For the health screening the group had a savings of $300,000.00.

2009 Hidalgo County Youth Character Education

Developed by Adelita F. Munoz, County Extension Agent-Family & Consumer Sciences

Relevance: Youth are one of the most important resources. The adolescent years are critical for them. They must be held accountable for their choices and actions. This generation has been formed in a culture where bad examples produce cynicism and where pressure to succeed drives a desire to win at any cost. This a concern of educators, parents, clergy, and key leaders. “Something has to be done “ said a local high school counselor.

Response: Leadership Quest was held in McAllen for 4-Hers and other youth. They heard key leaders and elected officials speak on character, Values and Respect. Mother-Daughter Tea Events were held to get the young girls to learn about respect, character education, and communications skills FCS camp was held and youth were allowed to do hands-on activities on trustworthiness, appreciation, communications skills and nutrition. Youth Quest participants
Food Challenge Workshops were held to help youth prepare for competition and encourage them to make good choices when making food purchases. 415 youth learned nutrition and moving activities and choices.

**Results**: All the youth that attended the events expressed that they felt character, values, respect, Communication Skills, nutrition and appreciation were important. They shared stories about young people at their schools that were always making ill choices and getting in trouble. All agreed these topics were important but most were not being addressed at school or home.

### 2009 Hidalgo County Money Smart, Financial Education for Families

Developed by Nora N. Garza, County Extension Agent-Family Resources

**Relevance**: Research studies indicate that people of all ages, incomes, and educational levels lack the basic financial knowledge and skills to ensure long-term stability for themselves and their families. Debt as a percent of total assets rose to 15% in 2004.

**Response**: The Money Smart program teaches the basics of personal financial management: the importance of saving money, using credit wisely, how to read a credit report, how to set financial goals, among other topics.

- Participants consisted of the general public and clients at rehab facilities.
- 15 class sessions for 221 individuals, resulting in 273 educational contact hours.
- 3 newspaper articles on money management were published for a combined circulation of 150,000.

**Results**: Before the lesson on credit reporting, all (100%) of participants admitted they knew nothing about credit reports and wanted to learn who they should contact to repair their credit. Following the lesson, all participants reported they felt confident in ordering and reading a credit report and planned to take steps to improve their credit by themselves.

The social benefits are great. If the clients from the rehab center cannot get control of their finances, this may lead to a feeling of hopelessness and helplessness, and they may return to drugs to cope with their financial problems or as a means of earning money. By staying off drugs, they are more likely to hold on to their jobs, support their families and contribute to the community.

### Other Significant Programs, Family and Consumer Sciences

Developed by Nora N. Garza, County Extension Agent-Family Resources
Starting Over, Debtor Education

Relevance: Bankruptcy law requires that those filing for personal bankruptcy complete a personal financial management course before their case can be discharged. Recent years have seen greater increases in filings by single women and older adults; a result attributed to divorce, widowhood, and unemployment.

Response: The Starting Over program has been approved by the U.S. Trustees Office as meeting the personal financial management course requirement. Class topics include goal setting, budgeting, savings, using credit wisely, credit reports, insurance and consumer protection issues.

• Participants are undergoing Chapter 7 bankruptcy.
• 11 class sessions were conducted for 69 participants, resulting in 147 educational contact hours.

Results: Following the class, the majority of participants (78%) reported they expect to make behavior changes. An overwhelming majority, (96%) reported they anticipate benefiting economically as a direct result of what they learned from this Extension activity. Participants also reported their knowledge of 10 concepts taught in the class increased significantly.

Child Care Provider Training

Relevance: The Texas Workforce Commission estimates that there are more than 100,000 child care providers caring for more than 760,000 children under the age of 13 in licensed or regulated child care facilities in Texas. Additionally, child care is the 16th largest industry in the state, generating more than 145,000 jobs and $2.3 billion in wages. Findings from longitudinal research have clearly established the fact that quality does matter when it comes to child care. Having a well-trained child care workforce is essential to providing the high quality child care that children need to develop physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively.

Response: Child care provider conferences were offered to professionals seeking to meet state mandated training requirements established by the state of Texas.
• 2 child care provider training conferences were conducted for 76 child care providers and directors who provide care for 1,122 children enrolled in 31 child care centers or family day homes.
• 581 clock hours of training were provided.

Results: Based on a customer service evaluation, child care providers reported they found the trainings to be very beneficial. More than 90% of participants acquired new information from the conferences, considered the trainings to be very cost-effective, considered the trainings to be very relevant to the work they do, plan to utilize the information gained at the conferences to improve their programs, and consider themselves better equipped to work with the children in their care.

2009 Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program

Developed by Luisa Colin, Extension Agent- EFNEP
Relevance: EFNEP, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, provides food and nutrition education for limited resource families with young children through Texas AgriLife Extension Service, with funding from USDA. In 2009, ENP programs assisted Texans in Bexar, Cameron, Dallas, El Paso, Harris, Hidalgo, Nueces, Tarrant and Travis Counties. ENP nutrition assistants help low-income families and youth acquire the knowledge, skills, and changed behaviors necessary for nutritionally sound diets and to contribute to their personal development and the improvement of total family diet and nutritional welfare.

Response: In Hidalgo County, ethnically diverse EFNEP nutrition assistants reach homemakers, youth and adult groups whose principal language may be English or Spanish. Participants learn that helpful ENP lessons in family and child nutrition, food safety tips and food shopping skills are shared in multiple languages.

Results: In 2009, 1,526 families with 3,291 children enrolled in EFNEP. 10,371 youth contacts were made through the EFNEP youth program.

In 2009, 275 adult volunteers donated 2,704 hours of work to EFNEP in Hidalgo County. At the Texas rate of $19.51/hr, this volunteerism has a minimum dollar value of $52,755. Many of these volunteers (68%) are past or present EFNEP participants. Volunteers make a difference in their own communities, and contribute to EFNEP’s ongoing success. Studies have shown that for every $1 spent on EFNEP, $10 were estimated to be saved in health care costs and $2 saved in food costs by participants. For Hidalgo County, this is $3.3 million in estimated health care cost savings and almost $665,000 in food costs.
2009 Hidalgo County Kids, Kows, and More RGV Youth

Developed by Doug Denny, County Extension Agent- 4-H

Relevance: In today’s world of “if you need it go to the store and get it” people have lost sight of where their food comes from. Youth in particular don’t understand the importance of agriculture and how it impacts our daily lives.

Response: Kids, Kows, and More RGV is designed to teach students the importance of agriculture in our lives with an emphasis on the agriculture industry in the valley. Kids, Kows, and More RGV focuses on teaching 4th grade students from across the Rio Grande Valley.

Collaborators and Partnerships
The Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Hidalgo County would like to recognize the partnerships with the following groups and individuals who provided materials, speakers, served on planning committees, or other support for this year’s program:
Texas Department of Agriculture
Texas AgriWomen
Texas Farm Bureau
Hidalgo County Farm Bureau
Cameron County Farm Bureau
TSTC Agriculture and Technology Department
Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show
Texas Citrus Exchange
North Alamo Water Supply Corp.
and many others

Results: I chose to do a pre test with select schools before the event and a post test with those same schools after the event. In years past we have gather schools from all three counties but this year it did not work out for Willacy and Cameron so Hidalgo County was the only county tested.

A total of 164 participants complete the pre test and 156 (95%) complete the post test. Even though there was a difference in the number of test completed was still got favorable results. Over all we had a 59% increase in knowledge of the area agriculture.

Results

Although the benefits are nearly impossible to measure I believe that the youth have a better understanding of where and what it takes to get the food that they eat and the clothes that they wear. I also believe that the main goal of this program which is to bring awareness to agriculture in the Rio Grande Valley was accomplished.

Future Plans: In 2010 the program will go on as planned. We have made some changes already to the pre and post test evaluations. Some of those changes are the format the questions are in. I would like to see more questions that focus on whether or not they know where there food comes from. So the questions will be focused in that direction rather than a single answer right or wrong type question.
2009 Hidalgo County 4-H Projects & Curriculum Plan

Developed by: Doug Denny, County Extension Agent- 4-H

Response: The Hidalgo County 4-H program worked with 4-H members, volunteers, and project leaders to increase 4-H participation thru project work in traditional and no-traditional areas including:

- Livestock Project Training
- South Texas Agricultural Roundup
- Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show
- Southwestern Exposition
- San Antonio Livestock Show
- Houston Livestock Show
- Embryo Life Science Curriculum
- 4-H District and State Events

Results: Due to an increase in 4-H participation we had more 4-H members participate in different events at the county level as well as the District and State level. The Hidalgo County 4-H program continues to work with the school districts to help them offer The Egg to Chick program as well as many other.

2009 Hidalgo County 4-H Leadership & Volunteer Development Plan

Developed by: Doug Denny, County Extension Agent- 4-H

Response: The Hidalgo County 4-H program hosted a number of leadership educational programs and activities for 4-H members and volunteers. Some of the programs that were hosted include:

- Club Manager Training
- Hidalgo County 4-H Council
- Parliamentary procedure training
- District 12 4-H Council
- District 12 4-H Council Retreat
- District 12 4-H Leadership Lab
- District 12 Election Convention

Results: The 4-H members and leaders in the program have a better understanding of the roles they play in the their local clubs. These individuals were able to learn leadership skills to that will make them a better leader. 4-H’ers and club officers now have a better understanding in parliamentary procedure and conduct their meetings in a more orderly manner. Club Managers and Volunteer leaders have a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities. As a result, 4-H club officer and volunteers are able to accomplish their roles and responsibilities as leaders in the Hidalgo County 4-H program.
2009 Hidalgo County 4-H Management Plan

Developed by: Doug Denny, County Extension Agent- 4-H

Response: The Hidalgo County 4-H Management Plan was developed to help address the needs of the day to day issues of the Hidalgo County 4-H program. The Agents along with Junior and Adult volunteers were able to accomplish this by hosting:

- Monthly Club Meetings
- Office Web Page
- Hidalgo County 4-H web page
- Project Meetings (State Validations)
- Monthly Newsletters and Calendars
- 4-H Enrollment
- 4-H Club Management requirements (Financial Review, Charter Renewal, Monthly Manager Reports, Volunteer Screening, Etc.)

A total of 640 4-H members participated in 24 different 4-H Clubs and 2 project clubs along with 3 chartered groups.

Results: This year the 4-H enrollment grew by 118 members which works out to 22 percent increase. With this increase we have established three new 4-H clubs to meet the demands of a growing membership. 4-H members and volunteers continued to work on providing a quality 4-H experience for all participants.

2009 Hidalgo County Expanding the Local Quality 4-H Experience Plan

Developed by: Doug Denny, County Extension Agent- 4-H

Response: The Hidalgo County 4-H Program continues to use every means possible to promote the 4-H program. Our office had established as goal to increase the 4-H membership by at least 5 percent per year for the next four years. We have increased our presence in many ways:

- School curriculum enrichment program for school districts
- Promote 4-H in local mass media (Newspaper, Public Access T.V.)
- 4-H Newsletters
- School Announcements
- RGVLS Promotional booth

A major effort to promote the 4-H programs occurred in the month of March thru May and again in September through October. Local community clubs worked to promote 4-H through the promotional booth but also with the National 4-H week. Local clubs put up posters to promote the clubs in high traffic areas such as banks.

Results: Due the efforts of the agents and members the Hidalgo County 4-H program was able to meet its goal of increasing the 4-H enrollment by well over 5 percent.
2009 Hidalgo County Community and Resource Development Entrepreneurship

Developed by Nora N. Garza, County Extension Agent-Family Resources

Relevance: Hidalgo County has one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation. To achieve and maintain the economic viability of this county, we must educate emerging and existing entrepreneurs based upon the educational needs of the group.

Response: The Entrepreneurship program introduces participants to a variety of skills that can be used to create products from home to generate income, and provide business training for those wishing to start their own home-based business. A craft show gave participants the opportunity to sell their products, make new contacts and practice their new business principles they had learned.

• 8 Classes in a variety of skills for making products was offered to 66 homemakers and 10 youngsters, resulting in 159 educational contact hours.
• 68 people participated in 2 business training sessions to learn how to start a business and how to manage a craft booth successfully, resulting in 166 educational contact hours.
• 43 exhibitors in 23 craft booths sold their handmade items and made new contacts for future customized orders at the Holiday Crafts and Small Business Expo. The craft show had an attendance of 420.

Results: Following the craft show, 71% of exhibitors reported adopting best practices learned at training workshops (applying for sales tax permit, marketing, salesmanship techniques, product placement, etc.). The economic impact expands beyond the money the vendors earned at the craft show. Vendors reported that they make more money from custom orders following the show.
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