

AgriLife Extension South Region



South District



# Making a Difference... ...in Zavala County

District Extension Newsletter for Commissioners' Courts in South Texas



**Marcelino Valdez**  
Agriculture &  
Natural Resources

Dear Court Members,  
In 2007, Texas Cooperative Extension celebrated the 100th anniversary of the County Extension Agent and of the Texas 4-H Program. In 2008, we launched a new strategic initiative that included a name change to AgriLife Extension. I want to thank you for your continued support of Extension and its many programs. I hope you find this newsletter helpful in updating you about the difference that Extension education is making in Zavala County and the public benefits these differences mean economically, socially, and environmentally to the community. We feel strongly that these preventive, educational approaches to community issues provide present and long term value to the County and its residents. Again, thank you for your support and please call whenever we may be of service.

Dr. Ruben J. Saldaña  
District Extension Administrator

## Agriculture and Natural Resources

Recent food contamination issues in fresh fruits and vegetables has prompted producers in the Winter Garden region to solicit Extension programs addressing food safety training and related educational efforts. The Zavala County Extension Agent in collaboration with Frio, Maverick and Uvalde Counties conducted an agricultural workers food safety training in Eagle Pass, Pearsall and Uvalde. 175 agricultural workers who work over 1,100 acres of fresh fruits and vegetables in the Winter Garden Region of Texas were trained on proper agriculture worker hygiene, preventing contamination of agricultural products in the field and in the packing shed. 100% of the participants successfully completed the training in this area. These educational efforts were expanded in 2008 to include a District Wide effort to develop a data base which will include results of water samples tested for e-coli in an accredited laboratory. As a result 12 water samples were submitted from Zavala County from 3 irrigation water sources that include the Nueces River, Carrizo Wilcox Aquifer and the Edwards Aquifer. Agricultural producers were taught oh collecting water samples, interpreting of water analysis results and determining e-coli level thresholds. Early 2009 a program assistance was hired with Texas Department of Agriculture funds to work with agricultural producers in Zavala and central Texas to develop standard operating procedures manual(SOP) to become Good Agricultural Practices (GAPS) Certified for a USDA or 3<sup>rd</sup> party audit. Agricultural producers will be recruited in 2009 to develop these manuals in preparation for audits and to insure a wholesome, clean and safe product from production to consumption.



THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM  
AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH & EXTENSION CENTER AT WESLACO

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## 2008 Educational Outreach

### Education in Group Settings

Number of Sessions	99
Number Contacts	2,796
Hrs Instruction	3,680

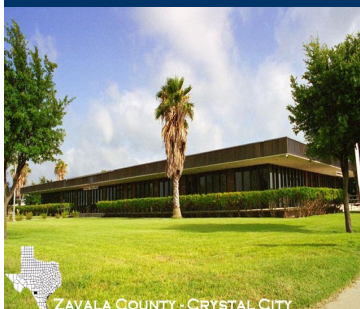
### Education for Individuals

Office Visits	70
Site Visits	225
Phone Consultation	110
Mail/Email	80

Visit us at:  
<http://Zavala-tx.tamu.edu>

## 2008 4-H Enrollment

Club Members	95
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ZAVALA COUNTY - CRYSTAL CITY

## 4-H & Youth Development

In January 2008 over \$97,000.00 dollars were contributed by local businesses, individuals and organization for the purchase of 4-H animal project shown and sold by 4-H members in Zavala County, during the annual Zavala County Junior Livestock Show. The participants were surveyed to determine the number of participants with established saving or checking accounts by these 4-H members for higher education expenses in the future or other educational needs. Records indicate that only 46% of the participants had such accounts established. The Zavala County Extension Agent in collaboration with 4-H volunteer parents, and financial institutions in the county provided a training for parents and 4-H member about the importance of saving for the future. This event was held in conjunction with teach the children to save day sponsored nationwide by financial institutions. As a result 53 new checking or savings accounts were established by 4-H members who sold 4-H animal projects this year. These translates to 97% of 4-H members who have shown and sold a 4-H animal project in the county have established a savings or checking account for funding higher educational needs in the future. These efforts have increased the contributors confidence in that youngsters in the Zavala County 4-H animal project program are utilizing these funds for a worthy cause. New 4-H members and parents coming into the program are informed of these efforts and are strongly encouraged to participate in these financial planning efforts.



## Community Development & Economic Development

Zavala County's economic development is a major issue of concern for leaders in the community and its citizens. Hunting continues to have a major economic contribution in the county. As a result hunting related industries have been discussed by large and small land owners about the management, marketing and expansion of these enterprises in the county. In July of 2008 landowners met at the Chaparrosa Ranch hunting camp to discuss these issues. AgriLIFE Extension was able to provide informational brochures on these topics as well as informing the participants of Extension resources such as Extension Wildlife specialist, Extension Eco-Tourism programs and other similar resources. Plans to establish a county wide hunting information network was discussed and possible organization of such a group by 2009. Additionally participants are very interested in establishing an area wide marketing program promoting outdoor recreation activities available in the region thus providing an opportunity for landowners to seek additional income from resources available on their property.

## Family & Consumer Sciences

Child health specifically lack of exercise leading to child obesity has been identified as a major issue by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas Department of Agriculture and the medical community as a whole. To address this issue, Extension in Zavala County implemented the Walk Across Texas program, reaching 245 youth in the La Pryor Independent School District in Zavala County with the goal of increasing health through exercise. Program participants walked an average of 26 miles with a aggregate total of 6370 miles. The program has become very popular among students and the La Pryor Independent School District athletic department that request have been made and planning has taken place to implement this program again in 2009. The economic impact of these behavioral changes range from \$2,500 - \$8,000 per adult participant in the net present value of the future health benefits.