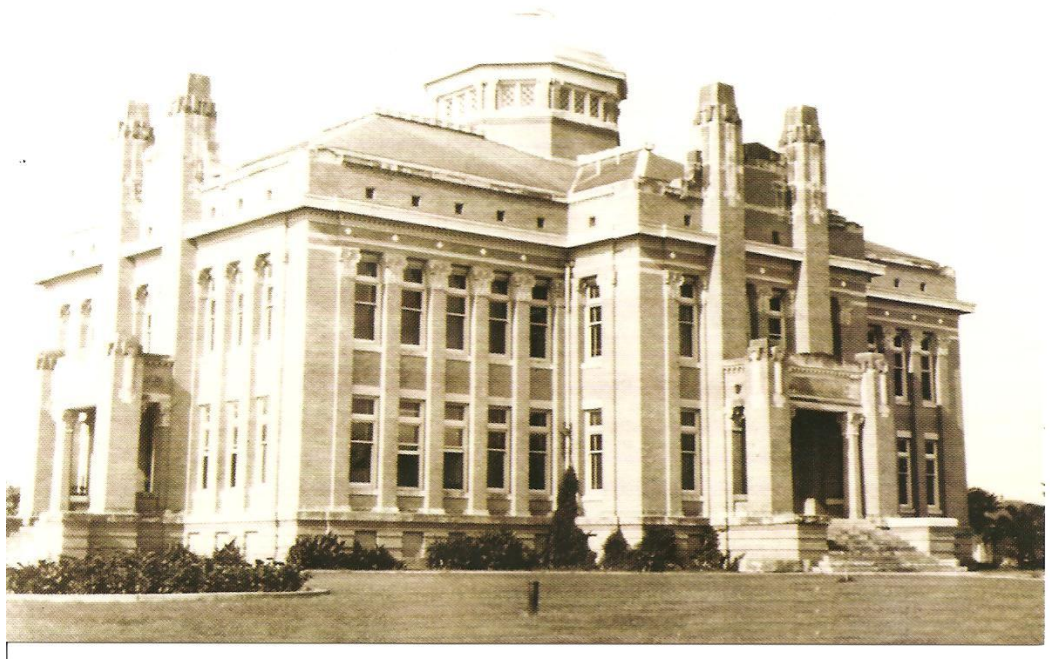




Extension Education in Jim Wells County

Making a Difference



Improving Lives. Improving Texas.

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

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

Through a well-organized network of professional educators and some 100,000 trained volunteers, Extension delivers practical research-based knowledge to Texans in all 254 counties. Our expertise and educational

outreach pertain to the food and fiber industry, natural resources, family and consumer sciences, nutrition and health, and community economic development. Among those served are the hundreds of thousands of young people who benefit annually from Extension's 4-H and youth development programs.

Texans turn to Extension for solutions. Its agents and specialists respond not only with answers, but also with resources and services that result in significant returns on investment to boost the Texas economy. The agency custom-designs its programs to each region of the state, relying on residents for input and for help with program delivery. Here are just a few highlights of Extension's impacts on this county and its people:

Jim Wells County – Summary of 2012 Educational Contacts

	# of Sessions	Goal #1	Goal #2	Goal #3	Total
Contacts by Faculty					
Faculty	188	1,840	171	1,490	3,501
Faculty & Volunteer	55	176	868	2,594	3,639
Total Group Methods	243	2,016	1,039	4,084	7,140
Individual Methods	---	572	1,106	2,521	4,200
Materials Distributed	---	---	---	---	---
Total Contacts	243	2,589	2,146	6,605	11,340
Contacts By Volunteers					
Group Methods	85	34	144	1,817	1,995
Individual Methods	---	---	12,550	---	12,550
Materials Distributed	---	---	---	---	---
Total Contacts	85	34	12,694	1,817	14,545
Newsletters/Announcements					
Marketing/Promotion	---	80	10	251	341
Educational Methods	---	---	250	555	805
Total Contacts	---	80	260	806	1,146
TOTAL ALL CONTACTS	328	2,703	15,100	9,228	27,031

Jim Wells County *Drought Management*

Relevance

Jim Wells County has experienced drought conditions in four out of the last six years. Drought has impacted local, state and national agricultural production as well as urban areas and other industries as well. According to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, Jim Wells County is home to approximately 25,000 head of beef cows and approximately 80,000 acres of row crops. In order to sustain profitability in these agricultural operations, land owners and managers must stay abreast of weather patterns, best management practices for their respective operations and seek alternative practices to implement when traditional practices are not viable.



Response

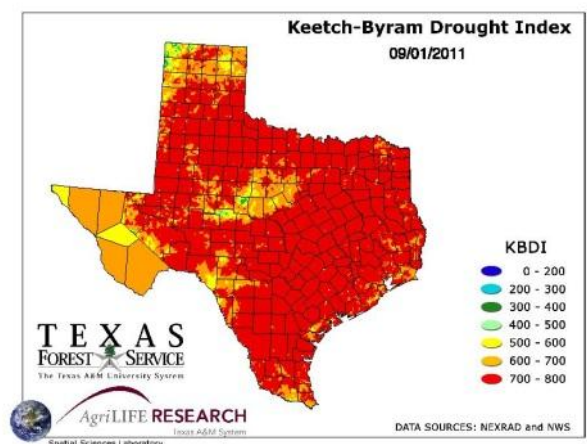
Jim Wells County Extension Beef and Row Crop Committees participated in coordinating and implementing various educational programs which incorporated program topics addressing drought management strategies. The following is a summary of the events that were held and the topics addressing drought management in each program.

- **Sunflower Producer Meeting:** Twenty-seven (27) agricultural producers and industry representatives met on Thursday, December 15, 2011 at the Jim Wells County Fairgrounds to discuss sunflower production and marketing strategies. Sunflowers are an excellent alternative crop which can be used in rotation with traditional commodities such as cotton, grain and corn or can be planted as a late season crop in failed acreage as well.
- **Pasture and Range Management Workshop:** Five (5) agricultural producers from Jim Wells County participated in a distance education workshop on Tuesday, March 6, 2012 at the Jim Wells County Fairgrounds. The live workshop was held at the District 11 Research and Extension Center. Jim Wells County was one of six satellite broadcast locations throughout the Coastal Bend. The workshop focused on drought management topics as related to pasture and range lands and beef cattle management as well.
- **Forage Testing:** During the month of May, four (4) hay grazer forage samples were submitted to the Texas A&M University Forage Testing Lab. Nitrate levels in the hay were determined and provided to the producers submitting the samples. Various other producers also inquired by phone or in person about nitrates in their forages and were provided with information pertaining to the prevention of nitrate poisoning in beef cattle.
- **Jim Wells County Row Crops Tour:** Due to drought conditions, the agenda for the traditional Row Crops Tour was modified to focus on drought management strategies in row crop production. Approximately 50 row crop producers and industry representatives participated in the program. The participants received information on alternative crops, insect management, harvesting strategies and marketing strategies during drought conditions. Participants also heard from the

Agriculture and Natural Resources

executive director of our local underground water district and gained knowledge of the district's goals and operations.

- **Result Demonstration:** A Rain Water Harvesting demonstration was established on the Gamez Ranch in Duval County during the month of August. A 400 square foot car port was established and fitted with rain water catchment equipment flowing into a 1000 gallon storage tank. Thru a water trough which is filled thru gravity flow, the storage tank then provides a source of water to area wildlife. Water collection and usage devices are used then to monitor the value of this tool. Monthly data collection will be summarized yearly and distributed to interested land owners.
- **White Tailed Deer Seminar:** A multi-county White Tailed Deer Seminar was held at the Gamez Ranch in Duval County on September 28, 2012. Approximately 40 land owners, hunters and agency personnel participated in the program. Various topics related to deer nutrition were discussed but most importantly, the use of the Rain Water Harvest Devices was highlighted and the demonstration prototype which was established in August was exhibited as an example of such devices. Participants received information on how to construct a rain water harvest device of their own and discussed the value of rain water harvesting.
- **Jim Wells County Farm Expo:** Approximately 50 agricultural producers and industry representatives participated in the Jim Wells County Farm Expo in Orange Grove on Tuesday, November 6, 2012. Various topics related to row crop and beef cattle production were presented. In the area of drought management, various seed company representatives led a discussion on drought tolerant genes in upcoming corn and grain varieties. This technology has been researched widely and should be available to producers in the near future.
- **Drought and Fire Weather Symposium:** Agent Rogelio Mercado participated in a Drought and Fire Weather Symposium on Wednesday, December 12, 2012 at Del Mar College in Corpus Christi. The symposium was coordinated by the National Weather Service and provided an update on the status of El Niño/La Niña weather pattern and its impact on south Texas weather. Mercado used the symposium to increase his knowledge of this subject matter.
- **Joint Beef and Row Crop Committee Meetings:** A joint meeting of the Jim Wells County Extension Beef and Row Crop Committees was held on Thursday, December 13, 2012 at the Jim Wells County Fairgrounds. The committees met to evaluate 2012 program efforts and receive program updates for 2013. Agent Rogelio Mercado coordinated two distance presentations via Lync (video conference) for the meeting. Steven Klose, Extension Economist (College Station), provided an update on the Farm Bill and its progress in Washington. Luis Ribera, Extension Economist (Weslaco), provided an update on commodity pricing and an outlook for the upcoming crop season. Joe Paschal, Extension Livestock Specialist, participated in the meeting and provided an update on beef cattle markets and current inventory. Mercado also provided the group with an update on El Niño Weather Patterns, its current status and outlook for the first quarter of 2013.



Agriculture and Natural Resources

Results

Fourteen (14) members of the Jim Wells County Extension Beef and Field Crop Committees completed a survey evaluating educational programs conducted in 2012 related to Drought Management and its impact on agriculture in Jim Wells County. Below are the results of this survey:

- 100% of the producers owning cattle experienced forced sales of livestock due to drought conditions.
- 71% of the producers owning cattle implemented early weaning practices in order to relieve stress on their cows.
- 71% of the producers owning cattle supplemented their cows with hay for more than 3 months out of the year.
- 93% of the producers owning cattle experienced a reduced calf crop or extended calving season.
- 100% of the row crop producers experienced 50% or more failed acreage during the year.
- 100% of the row crop producers experienced 50% or more reduced yields in the crops reaching harvest.
- 43% of the producers surveyed participated in three or more Extension educational programs during the year.
- 100% of the producers were satisfied or completely satisfied with the educational programs they attended.
- 86% of the producers increased their knowledge of El Niño Southern Oscillation and how it impacts weather patterns in south Texas.
- 28% of the producers owning cattle implemented forage testing and used the analysis to make decisions in their beef cattle operations.

The impact of this two year drought is significant and continues to drastically affect agricultural producers in this area. Educational efforts will continue to aid producers in making informed decisions in production practices and alternatives for their operations.



Jim Wells County

Better Living for Texans – Back to Basics

Relevance

In Jim Wells County, an estimated 8,138 individuals receive benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), historically known as food stamps. Studies have shown individuals who live in poverty (including SNAP recipients) have dietary intakes that are not in agreement with current recommendations (i.e. Dietary Guidelines or MyPlate). This audience, like many, may not recognize their risk for foodborne illness. Having enough food to eat is also a challenge; an estimated 1 in 6 households in Texas experience food insecurity.

Response

The Better Living for Texans (BLT) Program is a cooperative endeavor among Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), and the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) of USDA. A component of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), BLT offers food and nutrition education to SNAP recipients, applicants, and other low-income audiences to help improve their ability to plan and prepare nutritious meals, stretch food dollars, and prepare and store food safely. BLT also incorporates the *Walk Across Texas* program to promote physical activity.

During 2012, 69 Jim Wells County adults completed the BLT *Back to Basics* series. This program focuses on meal planning, stretching food dollars, and adopting selected behaviors that can reduce the risk of foodborne illness. This report reflects results of the pre, post, and 30-day follow-up surveys completed by all 69 participants.

Results

Most of the 69 participants identified themselves as female and Hispanic. More than 85% (n=61) had a high school education or less. Average household size of the participants was 1.9. Nearly 40% (n=27) of the participants received SNAP (food stamp) benefits. Almost 80% (n=55) of the 69 participants reported they received food from a food pantry within the last 30 days.

With the exception of using unit pricing, most participants were using the targeted food resource management practices either “always” or “sometimes” when they entered the BLT program. Immediately after the program ended there was a noted increase in the percentage of participants who intended to practice three of the four behaviors “always.” Thirty days later, the percentage of participants practicing all four behaviors either “always” or “sometimes” was higher than when the program began. Immediately after the program ended 91% (n=63) of the participants felt that they would be able to spend less money at the grocery store. Although monthly out-of-pocket food expenses did not change significantly as a result of the program, the number of people who “always” or “sometimes” ran out of food before the end of the month rose from 40 (pre-BLT) to 57 (30-days afterwards).

Almost three-fourths (n=53; 77%) of participants reported sanitizing cutting boards after cutting up raw meat or poultry when the program first began. Almost all participants indicated intent to do so immediately after the program ended and more than 90% (n=63) were doing so 30-days later. Also, at the 30-day follow-up survey we found that the percentage of clients who “always” let food thaw at room temperature dropped slightly from 20% (n=14) to 17% (n=12) thirty days later.

Family and Consumer Sciences

Meal Planning and Food Resource Management – adoption of behaviors

Behavior	Current behavior (pre) Number (%*)	Intent to change Number (%*)	Behavior 30 days later Number (%*)
Plan meals in advance			
Always	9 (13)	16 (23)	20 (29)
Sometimes	33 (48)	51 (74)	46 (67)
Never	12 (17)	0	1 (1)
Not Sure	15 (22)	1 (1)	1 (1)
No response	0	1 (1)	1 (1)
Shop for food with a list			
Always	16 (23)	50 (73)	54 (78)
Sometimes	29 (42)	18 (26)	14 (20)
Never	11 (16)	0	0
Not Sure	13 (19)	1 (1)	0
No response	0	0	1 (1)
Compare prices when shopping			
Always	24 (35)	50 (73)	49 (71)
Sometimes	27 (39)	19 (28)	18 (26)
Never	4 (6)	0	1 (1)
Not Sure	14 (20)	0	0
No response	0	0	1 (1)
Use unit pricing when shopping			
Always	8 (12)	12 (17)	19 (28)
Sometimes	21 (30)	50 (73)	40 (58)
Never	24 (35)	2 (3)	1 (1)
Not sure	14 (20)	4 (6)	6 (9)
No response	2 (3)	1 (1)	3 (4)
Run out of food before the end of the month?			
Always	4 (6)		1 (1)
Sometimes	36 (52)		56 (81)
Never	16 (23)		10 (15)
Not Sure	13 (19)		1 (1)
No response	0		1 (1)

* percentage is rounded up to the nearest whole number



Family and Consumer Sciences

Food Safety- adoption of behaviors

Behavior	Frequency (pre) Number (%*)	Frequency (post) Number (%*) (intent to change)	Adoption of Behavior (30-days later) Number (%*)
How often do you sanitize cutting boards after cutting up raw meat or poultry?			
Always	53 (77)	66 (96)	64 (93)
Sometimes	8 (12)	1 (1)	3 (4)
Never	1 (1)	1 (1)	1 (1)
Not sure	6 (9)	0	0
No response	1 (1)	1(1)	1 (1)
How often do you thaw frozen food at room temperature?			
Always	14 (20)	9 (13)	12 (17)
Sometimes	28 (41)	16 (23)	17 (25)
Never	18 (26)	44 (64)	39 (57)
Not sure	8 (12)	0	0
No response	1 (1)	0	1 (1)
How long did you leave your last meal out after it was prepared?			
Eaten/stored immediately	25 (36)	11 (16)	16 (23)
< 1 hour	21 (30)	16 (23)	12 (17)
1 – 2 hours	9 (13)	14 (59)	40 (58)
> 2 hours	3 (4)	1 (1)	0
Not Sure	8 (12)	0	1 (1)
No response	3 (4)		0

* percent is rounded up to the nearest whole number

Other findings:

- 86% (n=59) of the 69 participants identified BLT as their first exposure to AgriLife Extension. This suggests that the program is reaching new audiences who otherwise might not have the opportunity to benefit from Extension programs.
- Average monthly out-of-pocket food expenses reported by participants before participating in BLT was \$75.22 and was reduced to \$67.14 after the program.
- The participants who rated their perceived ability to prepare nutritious meals as either “good” or “very good” was 61% (n=42) before BLT (pre-survey) and rose to 97% (n=67) after BLT (post survey).
- 53 of the 69 (77%) participants rated the BLT program as “excellent.” Another 13 participants (19%) rated the program as “good.”

Jim Wells County Science of Agriculture

Relevance

As today's youth are further removed from farming and ranching operations, many do not understand the importance of agriculture and how it impacts their lives on a daily basis. Many young people believe that their source for food is the grocery store without thinking further as to where the food is actually produced. This lack of knowledge can create misconceptions about agriculture production but most importantly lessen its importance in our overall economy.

Response

To address the agriculture awareness issue, an agricultural literacy task force was formed of county Extension agents, Farm Bureau Board of Directors, members of the Soil and Water Conservation Board and a representative from the Natural Resource Conservation Service. The task force began working on "Ag Fair" in February and hosted the two-day event in May.

The event targeted 4th grade students from Jim Wells and Duval counties. 900 students participated in 5 educational stations. The first session was the mobile dairy classroom which was approximately 30-45 minutes in length. Students then rotated to four 20 minutes concurrent sessions. Youth were exposed to various aspects of the agriculture industry including: field crops production; environmental and natural resources; wildlife management and safety; and livestock and poultry production. Resource materials and the Food and Fiber curriculum were provided to teachers two weeks prior to "Ag Fair" for additional learning experiences in agriculture. Other material that was provided to the teachers prior to the program included: program information and objectives, schedule of events, donors and sponsors, speakers, pre and post tests for the students, and teacher evaluations.

Jim Wells County 4-H members were recruited and trained to serve as group leaders. As group leaders, 4-H'ers met their classes as they got off the bus, directed them to their sessions, gave the classes a brief explanation of the 4-H program, and answered any questions the classes may have had. Sixteen 4-H members volunteered a total of 112 hours during this event.

Local agricultural producers and industry representatives were also recruited to assist with the event and conduct the educational presentations. Approximately 20 adult volunteers contributed 280 hours of their time toward the success of this program.



4-H and Youth Development

Results

Seventy-five (n=75) students completed pre and post-test evaluations and 22 teachers submitted teacher evaluations for the event. When evaluating student responses on the pre-test, students provided 45% of the questions with correct answers. When evaluating student responses on the post-test, students increased their knowledge by 10% and provided 55% of the questions with correct answers. Only 31% of the students scored a 70 or better on the pre-test. However, 57% of the students scored a 70 or better on the post-test, with an increase of 39% receiving a passing score. Questions that were asked of the students related to the 5 learning sessions they participated in.

Twenty-one (95%) of the teachers (n=22) responding to the survey indicated that they were completely satisfied with the event.

Some of the comments from the teachers were:

- "This activity helps students to make a connection between agriculture and academics."
- "Each station had various examples, making it interesting for the students."
- "The information the students walked away with was incredible. They are still talking about it."
- "This activity was very informative. It was very organized; therefore, very productive."
- "Extremely educational and relevant information. All activities and speakers/presenters were excellent."
- "I loved the food and fiber curriculum CD I can use in the classroom."
- "All activities were great but the wildlife session and water shed are stand-outs. Students were so interested and active participants during the session."
- "The activity my students liked the most was the shearing of the sheep and the dairy session."
- "It is very well organized and includes information relevant to our county."
- "Children get to touch and experience agriculture, such as chocolate milk not coming from chocolate cow."
- "Greatly enjoyed the Mobile Dairy Classroom; made it relevant to students."
- "The hands on activities for students and the closeness of the exhibits."

Future Plans

Jim Wells County "Ag Fair" is scheduled for May 8-9, 2013.



Jim Wells County 4-H Food Challenge

Relevance

Decreased participation in traditional 4-H Food and Nutrition Projects has reduced the exposure of young people learning about healthy food choices, safe food handling, meal preparation, cost comparison and other essential skills related to their eating habits. Involving youth in this project can help them make better choices in their meal selections, increase their skills in culinary practices, and increase their knowledge in food nutritional values.

Response

The 4-H Food Challenge is a grass-roots effort developed by County Extension Agents to address the need for a new, “highly-charged” foods experience. Modeled after such competitions as the Food Network’s *“Iron Chef”*, the 4-H Food Challenge allows teams of three to five 4-H members to create a dish using a pre-determined set of ingredients. From these ingredients, 4-H members must identify, prepare and then present a prepared dish. Information related to the preparation process, nutritional value, serving size and cost of the dish is also part of their presentation. Throughout this process, 4-H members are applying the knowledge and skills gained through participation in the 4-H foods and nutrition project, demonstrating their culinary and food safety skills, and continuing to learn about making healthier food choices.

The specific objectives of the 4-H Food Challenge are:

- Provide opportunities for participants to exhibit their knowledge and skills when preparing and presenting a dish.
- Provide opportunities for participants to learn from other team members.
- Promote teamwork.
- Give participants opportunities for public speaking.
- Provide leadership roles and opportunities.
- Give 4-H members the opportunity to participate in a new and exciting competitive event.

The goal of implementing the 4-H Food Challenge was to give youth and volunteers a new opportunity for increasing knowledge related to foods and nutrition, My Plate, and being able to apply the knowledge and skills gained through project experiences. In Jim Wells County, the activity was introduced during 4-H Lock-Ins, summer camps, and a foods and nutrition workshop.

Results

As a result of participating in the 4-H Food Challenge, 37 participants completed the retrospective post survey: The data collected showed:

- 84% of the 4-H’ers increased their understanding of My Pyramid following Food Challenge.
- 75% of the 4-’ers increased their knowledge of food nutrients and their functions following Food Challenge.

4-H and Youth Development

- 54% of the 4-H'ers increased their understanding of the importance of food safety.
- 39% of the 4-H'ers increased their understanding of kitchen safety following Food Challenge.
- 62% of the 4-H'ers increase their knowledge of the purpose of different cooking methods.
- 65% of the 4-H'ers increased their knowledge of how to plan and prepare a recipe.
- 65% of the 4-H'ers increased their knowledge of how to alter a recipe according to dietary needs.
- 57% of 4-H'ers stated they have altered a recipe according to dietary needs based on what I have learned.
- 87% of 4-H'ers stated they have made healthier food choices based on what they have learned.
- 89% of 4-H'ers stated they have changed the way they have handled and prepared food based on what they have learned.
- 76% of the 4-H'ers stated they feel more comfortable with speaking with others because of their participation in the food challenge.
- 87% of the 4-H'ers stated they are more comfortable working in a team because they have participated in food challenge.
- 84% of the 4-H'ers stated they will be more comfortable with serving in a leadership role because they have participated in the food challenge.
- 84% of the 4-H'ers stated they are more willing to listen to others because they have participated in the food challenge.
- 84% of the 4-H'ers stated they are going to do a better job of following through on obligations because they have participated in food challenge.

Comments from Participants:

- "For the first time as of today, I learned to be a leader."
- "Food Challenge helps make better leadership decisions because you learn that you and others have to work together in order to get things done."
- "It also helps you to have an open ear."
- "I learned that leadership can be fun to do and a great learning experience."
- "Being able to make decisions on the spot with others shows that you can systematically find a quick easy solution. "

Future Plans:

The future of the Jim Wells County 4-H Food Challenge activity is bright. There will continue to be workshops, clinics, and camps hosted to increase the 4-H'ers knowledge of preparing and presenting a dish.



Jim Wells County Family Fun Day

Relevance

Health care costs and insurance premiums are on the rise nationwide. Consequently, low income families struggle to obtain good health care due to financial constraints and must seek alternative ways to raise their children in a healthy environment. Education and preventative practices are essential for parents to follow to help them keep their children healthy. However, government organizations which offer educational services and reduced cost health care programs many times are unknown to these individuals.

Response

The Jim Wells County Family and Consumer Sciences Committee annually coordinates an event called Family Fun Day. This event was held on Saturday, May 5, 2012 on the lawn of the Jim Wells County Courthouse. With a mix goal of providing entertainment and health education to families, the committee solicited 35 organizations and agencies to participate in the event. Music, food, games and door prizes were available to the participants as well as information on health care programs, healthy food choices, and exercise programs.

Results

Over 500 people participated in the program and gained information which will help them make better food choices, increase exercise, prevent exposure to disease and hopefully obtain assistance with their health care. Members of the Jim Wells County Family and Consumer Science Committee enjoy coordinating and conducting this annual event and find it very beneficial to its participants every year.



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

Jim Wells County

Staff



Rogelio Mercado

County Extension
Agent - Agriculture



Barbie Wymore

County Extension
Agent – 4-H and
Youth Development

Contact Us

Jim Wells County
200 North Almond
P.O. Box 1370
Alice, Texas 78333
361-668-5705 ph
361-668-2802 fx