

OFFICE OF CAMERON

**COUNTY EXTENSION** 

1390 W. Expressway 83

San Benito, TX 78586

956-361-8236 Phone

956-361-8289 Fax

http://cameron.agrilife.org

#### **EXTENSION STAFF**

Dr. Enrique Perez-Agriculture/ Natural Resources

Lilian Mezquida-Family & Consumer Sciences

Marco Ponce-4-H & Youth Development

Guadalupe Castro-Cooperative Extension Program-4-H & Youth Development

Tony Reisinger-Coastal & Marine Resources

Jennifer Herrera- Urban Horticulture

Oscar Zamora—Expanded Food & Nutrition

Elyssa Davis—Extension Program Specialist

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# **Cameron County Extension**

Dear Cameron County Commissioner Court,

We are pleased to be able to provide you with the information contained in this newsletter current educational information supported by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. We have included Agriculture/Natural Resources, Family Consumer Sciences, 4-H & Youth Development, Coastal Marine Science, Urban Horticulture, Expanded Food & Nutrition Education & Healthy South Texas Initiative information that should be of interest to you and helpful in improving the quality of life in communities. Keep in mind that we have a wide variety of extension educational publications that are available upon request from our office or by accessing the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension web site at <a href="http://agrilifebookstore.org">http://agrilifebookstore.org</a>.

You are encouraged to read this "Extension News" newsletter and keep abreast of all ongoing Extension events and activities. If you are interested in participating in any of the mentioned Extension educational programs, field days, tours, seminars, etc., throughout the year please feel free do so.

All Extension programs are sponsored by Extension program area committees for any ones educational benefit. We would like to acknowledge the Extension volunteer base, Extension Specialists and cooperators who contributed to the planning of all educational information compiled this educational newsletter. Should you have any questions pertaining to your agricultural operation, please feel free to contact our office located at the San Benito Annex Building at 956-361-8236.

Please visit us at http://cameron.agrilife.org

Mission Statement: To improve the lives of people, businesses, and communities across Texas and beyond through high quality, relevant education.

Sincerely,

Dr. Enrique Perez County Coordinator

County Extension Agent-Agriculture

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating

#### Healthy South Texas in Cameron County Written by: Specialist Elyssa Davis

The Healthy South Texas Coalition has met monthly, with 13 active members contributing to programs, development, and discussion on potential partnerships. The Coalition members were essential in connecting HST to community event centers, sponsors, as well as potential guest chefs for our Dinner Tonight Healthy Cooking School program. The HST Coalition is looking forward to planning 2017, with the addition of a set group of Board Members.

The Walk Across Texas Worksite Wellness program implemented with the Harlingen office of the Department of State Health Services had its finale in June, and the four teams celebrated with fruit parfaits, prize drawings, and certificates. They earned it, after walking a total of 5,413.29 miles!

From June to August, HST supported Family and Consumer Science Agent Lilian Mezquida as she implemented three Si, Yo Puedo Controlar Mi Diabetes! programs of seven weekly sessions each in San Benito and Brownsville. Participants who completed the program reported reductions in the A1C blood sugar scores, increased self-confidence, and increased knowledge about managing their diabetes.

Healthy South Texas presented Walk Across Texas to the Harlingen CISD Physical Education teachers during their HST-supported Learn, Grow, Eat, Go training in preparation for implementation in every elementary school this year. HST linked Agrilife programs and San Benito CISD physical education curricular requirements for their in-service training, and PE teachers even did a short 1/4 mile walk in place (with quiz questions on nutrition and physical activity) during the training!

The HST booth has been featured at the HEB Plus in Brownsville during their Healthy Heroes event, where, with two EFNEP assistants, 42 grocery shoppers had the opportunity to spin the HST prize wheel, answer nutrition trivia, and win prizes and information. Newly developed mosquito bite prevention flyers were shared with 54 guests at the Harlingen CISD Fit4Life health fair, as well as portion size information. HST also provided shade and information to participants at the Brownsville Cyclobia event on October 16, as they took a break from bike riding to learn about the upcoming Dinner Tonight! Healthy Cooking School program.



Students & teachers (and Moo Moo from Rodeo Dental) help guide warm-wp stretching at the Landrum Elementary School Walk Across Texas Kickoff & Health Carnival



Health Specialist Elyssa Davis discusses upcoming programs and ways for parents to keep kids from getting mosquito bites at the Morning Side Elementary School annual back to school health Fair



Cameron County Youth Ambassador show off their "Know and Show Sombreros" during a training sessions

# Si Yo Puedo Controlar Mi Diabetes Brownsville Si Yo Puedo Controlar Mi Diabetes Brownsville

# Family & Consumer Science

Written by: Agent Lilian Mezquida

From May to September 2016, the Family Consumer Science agent conducted multiple programs in Cameron County utilizing the Food Handler Certification Program. The Food Handler goal is to help the state and county protect the public from borne illnesses by ensuring that the people who handle food know how to safely store and prepare food. **39 Individuals completed** the program. Other program was Si Yo Puedo Controlar mi Diabetes. The goal for Si Yo Puedo controlar mi diabetes is to teach participants how to manage their diabetes with practical skills and useful information that they can apply in their life. **52 individuals enrolled** in this program. *Si, Yo Puedo* classes were delivered in Brownsville (two groups), and one in San Benito. 32 participants successfully completed pre- and post-test questionnaire. Diabetes selfcare scores reveal that participants improved in performing routine health behaviors to better manage their diabetes: pre-test mean score 23.5 out of total score of 44; post-test 29.9 out of 44. Average HbA1C scores decreased from baseline 7.6 M to 3 months post-intervention 5.9 M (N=9) A 0.5% reduction in A1C scores significantly decreases diabetes complications.

The Better Living for Texans assistants conducted multiple nutritional programs from May to September 2016. The Fresh Start to a Healthier You! is a holistic adult-learning series that uses practical experience and information to help change lives and improve health. Participants learned how to provide safe, healthy, and economical meals for their families and themselves. The "Go-Go Girls" team from Rockwell Manor Apartments in Brownsville, TX participated and completed the 8-week Walk & Talk program sponsored by the Better Living for Texans program of Cameron County and led by Program Assistant Gloria Carter in May 2016. During the 8 week program, team members participated in activities such as walking, aerobics and strength training and learned about the specific benefits that particular fruits and vegetables provide. So far **348** participants have completed the programs.









Cooking



Walk & Talk

# 4-H member attending Texas 4-H

Congress at the State Capital

# Tyle

4-H members elected to District 12 4-H Officers Position s



4-H members participating at Leadership Lab



4-H members competing in the County 4-H Food Challenge

# 4-H & Youth Development Written by: Agent Marco Ponce

The Texas A&M Agrillite Extension Service has been working continuously on youth development in Cameron County. Our successes this past year reached over 11,000 youth. This includes 4-H membership, special interest/short-term programs, and school enrichment programs.

We have been growing everyday by creating 4-H clubs and enrolling more 4-Hers these past few months. We recently have met with many new prospective 4-H families with the hopes of eventually welcoming them in the Cameron County 4-H program. One new club called the Silver Spurs 4-H Club has already formed in the Santa Rosa area and is already enrolling new members.

Over 20 Cameron County 4-H members and leaders attended Texas State 4-H Roundup in College Station. State 4-H Roundup is a state level competition for 4-H members who have placed first at our district competition and then advanced to state. Cameron County 4-H members placed 2nd in state in the Food Challenge - Nutritious Snacks division. 4-H members also placed fifth in the state in the Share the Fun - Solo Band contest and 5th in the Share the Fun-Musical division. Cameron County 4-H members also placed 7th in the state in the Livestock Skillathon contest.

Cameron County 4-H was well represented with 16 4-H members participating in our District 12 4-H Leadership Lab that was held on the campus of Texas A&M University in Kingsville. This year 4-H members were able to attend several concurrent sessions related to team building, leadership, and safety. One of the sessions served to educate 4-H members on the dangers of texting and driving. 4-H members also participated in team building exercises such as a variety of Olympic games and other outdoor activities. Each night was capped off with a nightly dance and an assortment of games for youth to participate in.

The District 12 4-H Election Convention was held on the campus of Texas A&M University Kingsville. Ty Rhyner of Highland Hustlers 4-H was elected the District 12 4-H Council President and Jake Rhyner was elected the District 12 4-H Council Treasurer. As District Council President, Ty presides over a 20 county area in South Texas that has over 4,000 4-H members enrolled. He then proceeded to run for a State 4-H Officer position and he was elected the Texas State 4-H Council Secretary. There are only 6 State Officer positions, and a Cameron County 4-H member now occupies one of those spots.

Cameron County 4-H had one of it's members attend Texas 4-H Congress held at the Texas State Capitol in Austin. This was a four day mock legislative session in which 4-H members were able to participate first hand in the law making process. 4-H members served as Senators, Representatives, lobbyists, and press corps during this mock legislative session.

Cameron County 4-H members have been participating in a community service project in which we have been collecting school supplies for youth who were affected by the severe flooding in Louisiana. The supplies will then be forwarded to the LSU Agriculture Facility for further distribution to those in need.

# Heroes 4-Health Ambassadors

Heroes 4-Health Ambassador.

At Harlingen Market Days



State Heroes 4-Health Summit



Prairie View A&M 4-H Youth Leadership Lab



4-H National Youth Science Day

Landrum Elementary

## **CEP 4-H & Youth Development**

Written by: Agent Guadalupe Castro



The Prairie View A&M Cooperative Extension 4-H program has been working continuously on youth development in Cameron County. Currently there are 3 4-H clubs chartered under Prairie View A&M 4-H program reaching a total of 60 participants in the county.

The Heroes 4-Health program funded through Youth Voice: Youth Choice Wal-Mart ended its grant year in September. Thank to the success of the Teen Heroes 4-Health Ambassadors and adults volunteers the grant has been refunded another year in Cameron County. The program was able to reach over 150 youth and 20 teen volunteers in the county. To celebrates the programs success, five Teen Heroes 4-Health Ambassadors attended the State Heroes 4-Health Summit in New Braunfels Texas in August 19-21, 2016. The five participants learned what other programs were being conducted through out the state by their fellow 4-H Ambassadors, they built their presentation skills, and were able to plan for the following grant year.

During 4-H week October 3rd through October 7th, Landrum Elementary in San Benito participated in the 4-H National Youth Science Day Drone Discovery event. 80 4th and 5th grade students gathered in the cafeteria and learned about Drones in Agriculture from Dr. Awal, a researcher from Prairie View A&M University, via web conference. The students then participated in the Drone Discovery National Challenge. They experimented with handheld captors and made their own gliders to see various methods of flight. They then experimented with camera sensors by flying a foam model plan with a keychain camera attached and took video of their surroundings. It was a successful event and was featured in the Valley Morning Star.

During the summer various summer camps took place in the Port Isabel Housing Authority and Browne Park Community Center. The camps taught about Learn, Grow, Eat, Go, Healthy Living, and Stem Exploration. Over 50 youth were reached as they learned how to pick the best garden spot, where our food comes from, aerospace engineering, and how to make a healthy plate.

Cameron County took 11 4-H students ages 13-17 to Prairie View A&M Youth Leadership Lab July 12-15, 2016. They traveled with their agent and adult volunteers to Prairie View Texas to attend the leadership lab which explored Career Awareness in Agriculture. They stayed in Prairie View A&M University to expose the student to a university environment as well as attended sessions with University professors.

La Sara ISD Community Resource

# Expanded Food & Nutrition Program

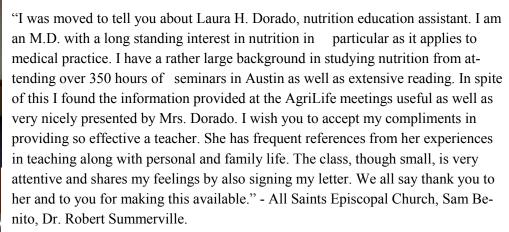
Written by: Agent Oscar Zamora



During the months of June through September, 5 Nutrition Education Assistants enrolled into the EFNEP program a total of 821 adults and graduated 117 throughout Cameron County, and enrolled 3 adults in Willacy County. During the same months, 2 Nutrition Education Associates enrolled a total of 153 youths and graduated 125 throughout Cameron County.

Volunteers contribute to the EFNEP program with in-kind donations (hours, food donation, class usage, and copies) Partial volunteer contribution during this time volunteers donated their time, efforts, and food donation.

Parents taking the EFNEP adult program receive many incentive items such as booklets, measuring cups, re-usable grocery lists, food thermometers, calendars, and certificates. This ensures that they are able to keep good references at home that they use later. Below is a validation of the success of the outcome of the EF-NEP Program:



"My name is Norma Jimenez-Cerda and I am the Academic Counselor at IDEA College Prep Brownsville. I would like to thank you for allowing Mrs. Cecy Bautista to give the parent nutrition classes to our parents. Mrs. Bautista has been coming to our campus for the past 3-4 years and she has been amazing with our parents. Mrs. Bautista is able to connect with our parents and give meaningful classes to them whether they are in English or in Spanish. Once again, thank you for the great program you are running! We are looking forward to another successful year."-Norma Jimenez Cerda; Academic Counselor; IDEA College Preparatory Brownsville.



Zavala Elementary School



Latter Day Saints



BISD Coaching Staff

### **Urban Horticulture**

Written by Agent: Jennifer Herrera



Bee Keeping exhibit booth at Plant Expo

A series of educational programs were conducted for beginning farmers, local growers and residents interested in starting a business. The programs consisted of a Vegetable Production Workshop, Market Ready Training: Selling to Restaurants, Production Resources and Tools for local growers, Marketing Strategies, Linking Production and Technology, RGV Grape Growing, RGV Vineyard and Home Winemaking Workshop. Three more trainings are scheduled to be completed before December 2016. They include Aquaponics, Organic Gardening and Backyard Basics: Canning and Preserving Workshop.

The Cameron County Master Gardeners hosted their Annual Plant Sale Home Gardening Extravaganza on October 8<sup>th</sup>. Over 150 Cameron County residents attended the event. The Master Gardener's had informational booths on rainwater harvesting, vegetable gardening, composting, soil testing, herbs, native plants, community gardening, bee keeping, and children's activities. A popular table was our plant clinic. Homeowners were encouraged to bring in diseased plant material diagnosed by AgriLife Extension Specialists.



Small acreage production for local growers program

This year we have 21 Cameron County Master Gardener interns working towards completing the Texas Master Gardener program. The Master Gardener Interns have completed 50 hours of horticulture educational training and are actively working towards obtaining their 50 hours of volunteer service.

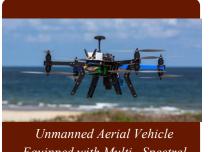
Cameron County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension began its fourth year with the "Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities (GHNC)" project. This grant was obtained by the Texas A&M Nutrition Department to increase Cameron County residents' access to fresh produce by teaching basic gardening skills that allow and promote the development of backyard and community gardens. The project targets underserved areas and areas defined as food deserts by USDA. We now have nine AgriLife community gardens in Cameron County. A series of six educational sessions were administered at each garden location to families participating in the GNHC program. The *Better Living for Texans* program provided nutrition educational programs and cooking demonstrations to teach participants how to incorporate the produce grown into their family's meals, thereby improving diet quality and stretching food resources. This year 150 families completed the GNHC training and produced 2121 pounds of produce.



Cameron County Master Gardener Intern class outdoor workshop

Webpage: http://txmg.org/cameron or

Facebook: Cameron County Master Gardeners



Equipped with Multi –Spectral imaging camera investigates 2016
South Padre Island Red Tide
(Seth Patterson photo for Texas Sea Grant)



Flight Path of red tide Monitoring Flight by UAV over Isla Blanca Park on South Padre Island (Jinha Jung Image)



Cameron County Emergency Planner Nathanael Flores learns to ID Red Tide.



Dr. Jinha Jung with Texas A&M University Corpus Christi Department of Engineering Preps a UAV for a Red Tide Overflight (Seth Patterson photo for Texas Sea Grant)

### Coastal & Marine Resources

Written by Agent: Tony Reisinger

Red tide returned for the second year in a row this fall. The red menace showed up in very low numbers at Port Aransas in late September. It caused fish kills at Padre Island National Seashore and spread south to South Padre Island and Boca Chica, reaching into neighboring Costa Azul, Mexico in October. This harmful algal bloom (HAB) spread respiratory irritation to residents along the coast via a toxic aerosol released from cells breaking in the waves and blown onshore by the wind. The respiratory impacts were not as severe as from last year's bloom. Minor fish kills were caused by the toxin along South Padre Island beaches, and into the Laguna Madre, wreaking havoc with the recreational fisheries and the South Padre Island economy.

Nine Red Tide Rangers were mobilized and trained at the University of Texas "UTRGV" Rio Grande Valley Coastal Studies Lab. Rangers monitored the bloom from late September into October dedicating 123 hours of volunteer time to sampling, counting cells, and determining aerosol impacts. Cameron County Emergency Management, State of Texas Emergency Management, and South Padre Island emergency and beach managers were trained in identification, sampling and aerosol assessment. We worked closely with the Texas Parks & Wildlife HAB Workgroup and they published our information on their red tide web page "Red Tide Status" to advise the public on red tide. Our info was used for ground truth to track the bloom by satellite with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration HAB group. This group publishes a map based on our cell counts twice weekly, depicting the areas of red tide off our coast. We keep the public informed daily on the status of red tide on our Facebook pages: "Red Tide Rangers" and periodically on "Texas Coastal Naturalist".

This year's red tide afforded us a second opportunity to demonstrate the deployment of a new high tech tool, unmanned aerial vehicles (drones or Unmanned Aerial Vehicles) to monitor bloom location and concentration. We invited Texas A&M Corpus Christi researchers to return this year and conduct another cooperative demonstrations studying the feasibility of detecting and tracking red tide. This demonstration was spin-off from last year's activities. UAVs may be the future for HAB monitoring, enabling more cost efficient fish kill assessment and bloom tracking. A sad side note to this years red tide is the stranding of eight Kemps ridley sea turtle on South Padre Island with only one survivor. Red tide is the suspected culprit.

Shrimp production in Cameron County and all of the Texas coast was off this quarter compared to last year with a decline of ~30% for landings. This can be attributed to heavy rains this spring in Texas, creating a low salinity environment, not conducive to brown shrimp survival in the estuaries. High prices and low fuel costs buoyed the Brownsville and Port Isabel fleets.

We are continuing an effort to improve turtle excluder device "TED" compliance funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Federation through Texas Sea Grant. This quarter 137 vessels were boarded at the docks and TED training was provided to 360 captains, crew, marine agents and net makers. Crews are educated on correct TED angles and net flap cuts to allow sea turtles to be released should they encounter a shrimp trawl.

Bycatch reduction device "BRD" compliance is demonstrated to teach crews proper location of the devices in their nets. Red snapper remains the offshore fish species of concern in the Gulf and fisheye BRDs release at least 30% of fish encountered by trawls, helping conserve these fish. Trainings were conducted aboard commercial shrimp vessels in Cameron County ports and around the Gulf of Mexico to Florida. Our efforts help captains and crews understand TED and BRD construction and installation, contributing to the sustainability of the fishery.

The Rio Grande Valley Chapter Texas Master Naturalist program now has 150 active members and our newest chapter, the South Texas Border Chapter with 77 members headquartered in McAllen. The South Texas Border Chapter shares Cameron County for volunteer projects. The Cameron County Native Plant Center under construction with Ocean Trust on South Padre Island is a favorite volunteer site. Both chapters combined had over 3000 volunteer hours this quarter valued at \$69,000.

Our Texas Coastal Naturalist program remains our most popular volunteer program. Trainings are held in conjunction with the UTRGV Coastal Studies Lab. We offer classes for first response in harmful algal blooms i.e. red tide, marine mammal stranding response, cold stun sea turtle rescue efforts, oil spill response and other marine related classes. Fish printing has become our most requested class and class surveys indicate they want more of these, which we are planning for next year.

Agriculture Production Committee



Agriculture Result Demonstration
Grain Sorghum



Healthy Soil for Agriculture Production

## Agriculture & Natural

Written by Agent: Dr. Perez

#### Agriculture Production Committee Addresses Issues

The Agriculture Production Committee met on Wednesday, August 31st at the Extension meeting room. Members of the committee reviewed and evaluated 2016 programs and developed program plans for the 2017 year. The major focus was to address on farm field research activities with certain crop commodities and to add economic values to results. The committee provided input on profitability and competitiveness and felt the need to be address in all field research-agriculture result demonstrations. Chairperson of the Agriculture Committee set next meeting date in January 2017 to promote/marketing of all agriculture programs for the coming year.

#### **Extension Leadership Advisory Board**

The Extension Leadership Advisory Board met on Thursday, September 29th at the County Extension meeting room. Chairperson Dr. Jose Luis Cavazos presided over the meeting. The focus of the meeting was to outline upcoming 2017 program plans finalized submitted by each program area committee (agriculture, Family Consumer Science, 4-H and Youth Development and Community Development ). All program plans for educational programs were finalized by committee. They are to be implemented and evaluated by each committee this coming year that address base issues and critical issues in the county. The executive board also discussed to set a date for the upcoming Annual Recognition for Volunteers on Thursday, December 1st 2016.

#### **Pesticide Safety Training**

Agriculture producers participated in a Pesticide Safety Training to fulfill requirement for a State restricted license for pesticide use in agriculture production. Anyone that engages in any agriculture production can obtain a State license for the use of non over the counter chemicals. Individuals participate in a 8 hour training learning about pesticide labeling, application safety/ use and calibration . After the training individuals apply with the Texas Department of Agriculture on line for testing and securing a license. Training's are held quarterly (February, May, August and November).

#### **Grain Sorghum Hybrid Tests-Result Demonstration Research**

The purpose of the RD's is to evaluate hybrid variety performance at harvest and provide agriculture year Result Demonstration-Research plots were established in local farms in Cameron County. Producers are provided with results/information that is current and research based as to hybrid varieties performance and are adopted to climatic and environmental conditions for planting in Cameron County. This information is useful in obtaining current hybrid varieties and evaluate their performance in different types of soils, type of irrigation systems, and method of plant spacing. This coming year added valve will be conducted on all Hybrid varieties as requested by the Agriculture Production Committee in Cameron County.

#### **Healthy Soil for Agriculture Production**

Agriculture producers will be participating in the Annual Soil Campaign. Nutrient management is an important economic and environmental issue which affects water quality, soil quality and crop production. Amounts in excess of crop need, timing and/or application of fertilizer nutrients can contribute to water quality impairment. A grant was awarded to provide free soil testing analysis to agriculture producers. Analysis of soil samples will be done at the Texas A&M Soil, Water Test Lab in College Station. Agriculture producers can soil test their production crop land and obtain a complete report on Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Potassium, Sodium, and pH levels. In year agriculture producers were able to recognize their savings in nutrient management and at the same time address the issue on environmental stewardship management in agriculture. A reduction of fertilizer translates saving and promoting healthy soil for agriculture production.

### Upcoming Activities 2016 - 2017

#### **Extension Education**

| Master Naturalist Board Meeting Master Gardener Board Meeting | October 4, 2016<br>October 6, 2016 |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Master Naturalist General Meeting                             | October 11, 2016                   |
| Keep San Benito Beautiful Committee Meeting                   | October 12, 2016                   |
| Master Gardener Association Meeting                           | October 13, 2016                   |
| Master Naturalist General Meeting                             | November 1, 2016                   |
| Master Gardener Board Meeting                                 | November 3, 2016                   |
| Parenting Connections   | November 7, 21, 28, 2016           |
| Heroes 4-Health Ambassador Meeting                            | November 7, 2016                   |
| Master Naturalist General Meeting                             | November 8, 2016                   |
| Keep San Benito Committee Meeting                             | November 9, 2016                   |
| Master Gardener Association Meeting                           | November 10, 2016                  |
| Office Close—Veterans Day                                     | November 11, 2016                  |
| Master Wellness Volunteer Training                            | November 12, 2016                  |
| 4-H County Council/Club Managers Meeting                      | November 21, 2016                  |
| Office Closed—Thanksgiving                                    | November 24-25, 2016               |
| Master Gardener Board Meeting                                 | December 1, 2016                   |
| Heroes 4-Health Ambassador Meeting                            | December 5, 2016                   |
| Master Naturalist Board Meeting                               | December 6, 2016                   |
| Master Gardener Association Meeting                           | December 8, 2016                   |
| Master Naturalist General Meeting                             | December 13, 2016                  |
| Keep San Benito Beautiful Committee Meeting                   | December 14, 2016                  |
| 4-H County Council/Club Managers Meeting                      | December 19, 2016                  |
| Office Closed—Day after Christmas                             | December 26, 2016                  |
| Office Closed—Day after New Years                             | January 2, 2017                    |
| Master Naturalist Board Meeting                               | January 3, 2017                    |
| Master Gardener Board Meeting                                 | January 5, 2017                    |
| Heroes 4-Health Ambassador Meeting                            | January 9, 2017                    |
| Master Naturalist General Meeting                             | January 10, 2017                   |
| Keep San Benito Beautiful Committee Meeting                   | January 11, 2017                   |
| Master Gardener General Meeting                               | January 12, 2017                   |
| Office Closed—Martin Luther King Jr. Day                      | January 16, 2017                   |
| 4-H County Officers/Club Managers Meeting                     | January 23, 2017                   |

Visit our Webpage at http://cameron.agrilife.org or

Facebook: TX A&M Agrilife in Cameron County for upcoming programs and activities.