



**Extension Education in Duval County**  
*Making a Difference*

*The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife.*

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service has long been dedicated to educating Texans. Extension education evolved nationwide under the 1914 federal Smith-Lever Act, which sought to extend university knowledge and agricultural research findings directly to the people. Ever since, Extension programs have addressed the emerging issues of the day, reaching diverse rural and urban populations.

In Texas, all 254 counties are served by a well-organized network of professional Extension educators and some 100,000 trained volunteers. Extension expertise and educational outreach pertain to the food and fiber industry, natural resources, family and consumer sciences, nutrition and health, and community economic development.

## EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE *Providing Solutions*

Among those served are hundreds of thousands of young people who benefit annually from Extension's 4-H and youth development programs.

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

## Duval County – Summary of 2016 Educational Contacts

<b>Total Contacts:</b>	<b>6,569</b>
Educational Events	3,184
Other Contacts	3,385

	<b>Contacts</b>	<b>Hours</b>
All Session Contacts	3,184	6,071
<b>Plan Level</b>		
In Depth	2,724	4,970
Outreach	450	1,089
Organizational Support	10	11
<b>Task Type</b>		
Planning Group	130	242
Educational Method	3,014	5,808
Interpretation	40	21
<b>Delivery Method</b>		
Face-to-Face	3,171	6,056
Technology Assisted	13	15
<b>Demographics Ethnicity</b>		
White	330	633
Black	0	0
Hispanic	2,854	2,854
Asian	0	0
<b>Cash and In Kind Donations by AgriLife Supporters and Collaborators</b>	<b>\$ 5, 410</b>	



## HEALTHY SOUTH TEXAS

### Agriculture and Natural Resources Base Plan:

The primary purpose of this educational program plan was to meet key clientele, stakeholders and developed relationships in Duval County. The agent made a goal to meet as many future clienteles as possible once he was based in his home county. The agent Matthew Dudley also made it a priority to gain valuable weather data from large producers on a weekly basis and provide detailed crop weather reports and thorough Texas Data reporting Texas on all activities conducted from the Duval County extension office.

**Relevance:** Community members of Duval County range from home-owners with turf grass lawn, or backyard poultry, and small garden, cattle producers that have varying sizes of acreage, to ranch owners with hundreds of acres whose primary goal is hunting and wildlife conservation. It is important to consider that one should remember that an extension agent should promote and encourage further education on agricultural topics effecting Duval County and the communities of Benavides, San Diego and Freer, TX. In order to facilitate the agricultural needs of Duval County, the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service: Duval County participated and offered the opportunity to be involved in the Duval County White-Tailed Deer Seminar. This event was coordinated by Jennika Cantu and focused on the following deer management topics: *Integrate Whitetail Deer with Cattle Grazing* presented by Dr. Megan Clayton from Texas A & M AgriLife Extension, *Common Feeding Mistakes* presented by Mark Stanley from Nutrena, *Managing Deer Nutrition* presented Emily Belser, *Prescribed Burning for Wildlife* presented by Vivian Garcia from USDA, *Chronic Wasting Disease* presented by Patrick Tarlton – Executive Director for the Texas Deer Association, *Assessment of Intensive Deer Management* presented Dr. Bob Zaiglin, and *Designing a Feed Program for Your Ranch* presented by Scott Hohensee from Purina.

Also the Healthy South Texas plan offered the residents of Duval County services related to agriculture and natural resources such as the water well testing campaign through the Texas Well Owner Network Program, and end the goal of both education plans is to help these two agents to help prepare them for their future careers in the agriculture extension service.

The primary issue affecting everyone in Duval County is the water availability and quality. Marisa Dimas conducted with TWON water well screening program in during the month of August along with the specialist John Smith, and Jennika Cantu assisted with the water well testing campaign. Duval County has struggled with significant amounts of arsenic in their local groundwater supply for numerous years. Water supplies in Duval County are also known to contain high amounts of nitrates and salinity as well. It was important for both the Health extension agent Marisa Dimas to communicate the importance of water well testing to all residents to test their water.

The agriculture and natural resources base plan allowed for this agent to become involved in the agricultural sector of Duval County, specifically within the areas of Wildlife and Livestock.

## Agriculture and Natural Resources

The goal of the Agriculture and Natural Resource Base plan was to offer educational, issue identifying, and relevant programs that benefited the members of Duval County.

**Response:** The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Duval County engaged, participated, attended, and assisted with the following activities listed below in order to address the Agriculture and Natural Resource Base program plan by utilizing the following methods:

- County Agent Monthly Reports
- Assistance with water quality screening
- Weekly Crop Reports
- Mass email distribution through 4-H connect in December 2016 explaining the veterinary feed directive.
- 2016 Duval County White Tailed Deer Seminar – was presented in Benavides at the Garza Party Barn for 89 landowners from Duval and surrounding areas.

**Acknowledgement:** The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Duval County would like to recognize the cooperation with the USDA: NRCS Soil and Water Conservation District, John Smith, Water Specialist from Texas A&M University College Station, Purina, Nutrena, Patrick Tarlton, Executive Director for the Texas Deer Association, and the Texas Well Owners Network Program.

**Results:** The results of these programs and opportunities allowed for further education for not only community members of Duval County, but also the Health Extension Agent and Agriculture, and Natural Resource Agent. Citizens of Duval County had the educational opportunities to get their water screened through the TWON by Marisa Dimas for Nitrates, Salinity, Arsenic, and Bacteria presence and the White-Tailed Deer Seminar. These programs were put in place to respond to the identified issue of water quality and wildlife concerns, respectively. There was a total of 16 water wells that were tested and 89 landowners attended the White-Tailed Deer Seminar.

**Summary of Results:** TWON results show that these agents met the goals to address the water quality issue identified by the citizens of Duval County. This program has a majority value of \$307.83-\$4,925.28 to its participants. It is important to this agent to promote this program in 2017 in order to encourage annual water screening from participants in Duval County.

**Acknowledgments:** The Texas Well Owner Network, John Smith, Dr. Diane E. Boellstorff, Rogelio Mercado, Frank Escobedo, and Vic Cantu.

**Future Program Activities:** Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Duval County will continue to offer the water well screening for the community to address water quality issue for its citizens along with seminars regarding wildlife issues as relevant to the community.

## Agriculture and Natural Resources



*Chronic Wasting Disease* presented by  
Patrick Tarlton – Executive Director for the  
Texas Deer Association



Audience at the Duval County  
White-Tailed Deer Seminar



## 2016 Healthy South Texas Plan

**Marisa Dimas**  
**Extension Agent**

The overall goal is to reduce preventable diseases and their consequences in South Texas by 25 percent by 2025, by piloting first in 27 counties in Texas. The focus will be initially on building highly functioning interdisciplinary health coalitions within each county, addressing the need for physical activity through Walk Across Texas and other physical activity programs and recruiting and training 4-H Healthy South Texas Youth Ambassadors. Community-based coalitions will work with agents to identify and implement other program goals based on local needs of the county.

### **Relevance:**

Healthy South Texas aims to improve both health education and health outcomes. The effort will educate community members on healthy food preparation, encourage regular physical activity, and provide resources for preventing diabetes, asthma, and infectious disease. We will engage families and work with community partners such as hospitals and clinics. Major programs, events, and other activities were implemented in Duval County such as:

- **Walk Across Texas**, a web-based, 8-week program to help people of all ages support each other as they engage in regular physical activity
- **Healthy South Texas Youth Ambassadors**, youth health advocates trained to share health education with their peers and community.
- **Water Quality**: Water Well Testing under Texas Well Owner Network
- **Health and Wellness**: General nutrition and health information education given to the senior citizens of Benavides and Realitos for the months of June, July, September, and November at the Benavides Civic Center and Realitos Civic Center, respectively.
- **Benavides Cancer Awareness Rosary Event**: consisted of a rosary at the Santa De Rosa Lima Church, a Breast Cancer Awareness Walk and Program were information was giving to the participants regarding breast cancer and services through CACOST BCCS program. Partnered with Commissioner Garza and Duval County Sheriff Ramirez for event, with about 150 participant.
- **Learn, Grow, Eat, & Go-** a total of 68 students participated in the 10-week nutrition, gardening, and physical activity curriculum at Norman Thomas Elementary School in Freer, Texas.

### **Results:**

Based on the results of Walk Across Texas, we were able to identify the impact of the program within the community and the economic impact in Duval County. Also, thanks to our Healthy South Texas Coalition, we were able to identify health concerns and health issues within the county. As a result, our HST Coalition decided to have a Health Fair for the January 2017 to educate the community and provide health screenings to reduce chronic illnesses. Also, collaborations with other agencies have been an open door to expansion of programs, events, and other activities.

## Summary of Results:

### HEALTHY SOUTH TEXAS COALITION MEMBERS

Our county recruited, trained, and mobilized a community Healthy South Texas coalition, identifying the most critical health needs in our community and helping assess the best way to address those needs.

#### 6 COALITION MEMBERS REPRESENTING:

City/County/State Government (3)	Other (1)
Elected Officials (1)	Public Health Professional (1)

### EMPOWERING YOUTH

Healthy South Texas Youth Ambassadors are local, high-school age youth recruited by agents and trained to serve as a community health and wellness advocate. These ambassadors also assist county Extension agents in providing leadership to the youth components of Healthy South Texas.

- Three Duval County youth have been selected through the application process and trained on Walk Across Texas; Learn, Grow, Eat, & Go!; and My Plate.
- Recent outreach into the community includes sharing Zika Virus information at Health Fairs, community events, and football games.



Duval County Healthy South Texas Youth Ambassadors:  
(left to right) Renee Rodriguez (Freer HS), Samantha Chapa (San Diego HS),  
and Noah Farias (Benavides HS).



## **Duval County Walk Across Texas!**

<http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu/>

Walk Across Texas! is an eight-week program to help people of all ages support one another to establish the habit of regular physical activity. Walk Across Texas! is recognized as a Best Practice Physical Activity Program by the Texas Department of State Health Services.

### **The Issue**

- 32.4% of Texans are obese<sup>4</sup>.
- 27.2% of American adults report no leisure time physically activity<sup>2</sup>.
- 16.6% of youth report no physical activity<sup>2</sup>.
- Only 19% of adults and 30% of youth reported they get regular, moderate exercise to meet physical activity guidelines<sup>2</sup>.

### **Background**

- Regular physical activity and controlling weight can significantly reduce the risk and impact of chronic diseases like heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, cancer, high blood pressure, and depression.
- Regular physical activity is also associated with fewer physician visits, hospitalizations, and medications.
- Chronic diseases account for 70% of deaths and 86% of U.S. health-care costs<sup>1</sup>.
- Community-wide programs like Walk Across Texas! have been associated with significant increases in physical activity.

### **Severity of the Problem**

- Texas ranks 9th as the most physically inactive state<sup>4</sup>.
- Texas ranks 10th as the state with the highest adult obesity rates<sup>4</sup>.
- Texas ranks 10th as the state with the highest rates of obese 10-17 year olds.

### **The Educational Program**

For eight weeks, teams of up to eight people, school classes, or individuals virtually walk 832 miles across the State of Texas.

- Visit <http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu>.



## **Agriculture and Natural Resources**

- The program begins with a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service agent forming a community task force with members from targeted groups, such as schools, worksites, churches, etc.
- Plan Kick-Off, Half-Way, and Recognition activities.
- Train site managers, captains, teachers, and other volunteer helpers.
- Register participants online.
- Enter mileage online.
- Participate for eight weeks.
- Provide recognition for various accomplishments throughout the program!

## **Impact of Walk Across Texas!**

This program significantly increases participant physical activity.

- 152 Texas counties participated in 2016.
- 36,518 people registered statewide in 2016.
- 70 adults in our county registered and participated in the WAT! program.
- 50 adults in our county completed the eight-week program.
- Adult participants' average weekly mileage increased 2.8 miles from week one to week eight.

## **Economic Impact to the County**

If the 66 adult participants and 457 student participants completing the eight-week program continue walking at the same level as during Walk Across Texas!, they have the potential economic impact for Duval participants is approximately \$304,183 in future health care costs by avoiding type 2 diabetes and by reducing work absences.

## **Participants' Impact**

One of our school districts, Freer ISD, completed a majority of the miles both in adult teams and student participation. The impact was long lasting they decided to continue their WAT program even after the 8 weeks has been completed.

## Family and Consumer Sciences



Midway WAT Event

## Acknowledgement

A special thanks to the following agencies who participated and sponsored our events throughout the Walk Across Texas:

Healthy South Texas Coalition  
Walk Across Texas Committee  
Duval County  
Duval County Judge  
Duval County Sheriff's Dept  
Freer ISD  
Benavides ISD  
Commissioner David Garza

## Future Program Actions:

To incorporate Walk Across Texas! With an event that will attract more people of all ages to engage and maintain being active including schools involvement.



## 2016 Duval County Learn, Grow, Eat & Go!

The Learn, Grow, Eat & GO curriculum is a research and evidence-based school enrichment project of the International Junior Master Gardener Program. This multifaceted garden, nutrition, and physical activity curriculum is not only novel & academically-rich, it's also shown to increase student vegetable preference, physical activity, family gardening, family meal time and decrease student BMI. Learn, Grow, Eat & GO curriculum provides ten (10) concepts of instruction that emphasize Science, Math, Language Arts/Reading, Writing, Social Studies, Physical Education, Health, Horticulture, and Nutrition all with a solid correlation to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards.

**Relevance:** Research shows providing children with vegetable gardening opportunities, coupled with the implementation of the Jr. Master Gardener (JMG) curriculum and the Learn, Grow, Eat & Go curricula, improves nutritional knowledge and motivation to eat fruits and vegetables. Vegetable gardening improves math and science scores, increases vocabulary, and improves overall student attendance. As our area is consistently high in childhood obesity rates, it is important to the health and our community to support teachers in developing JMG health and nutrition programs. Incorporating classroom activity breaks and increased physical activity can improve school performance and the overall health and wellness of children.

**Response:** Norman Thomas Elementary School, Freer Texas approved to have the curriculum integrated during their classes and a total of 68 students (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) participated in the educational program.

**Results:** Students and teachers increased their knowledge of plant parts and plant needs and integrating science with other subjects. Students had a lack of interest in vegetables, but through the curriculum, they were able to grow they're on vegetables and their interest in vegetables increased.

**Acknowledgement:** A special thanks to Freer I.S.D and Norman Thomas Elementary School for providing support throughout the program the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade science teacher Mr. Orta and FFA Teacher Mr. Perez who assisted during garden implementation along with Marisa Dimas and Travis Trevino.

**Future Plans:** LGEG will be implemented for the following school year along with an additional school district in the county and we'll be receiving numerous supports from the community to expand our vegetable garden.

## Family and Consumer Sciences



Freer FFA members, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade science Mr. Orta, Travis Trevino, and third graders building raise beds.





### 2016 4-H Grows Plan:

#### Youth Livestock Plan

Developed by Travis Trevino, Duval Extension Agent- Ag

**Relevance:** Youth Livestock Projects is addressed through the county by encouraging youth to participate in the Duval County Fair. With the help of the Duval County Fair Board the Agriculture Agent can attend monthly meetings in order to learn more about the identified issue. By promoting state validation, major livestock show opportunities, and the county livestock show, the Agriculture Agent can increase the knowledge of what benefits come from showing livestock. The second identified issue was

**Response:** The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service office in Duval County participated, attended, and assisted with the following activities in order to address this relevant topic:

- Duval County Fair on March 3-5, 2016 at the San Diego Rotary Pavilion with assistance from Jennika Cantu and Marisa Dimas.
- Freer Fair on March 10-12, 2016 at the Freer Fairgrounds with assistance from Jennika Cantu.
- Duval County Fair Validation (Lamb, Goat, Swine) in the absence of ANR agent, Jennika Cantu completed.
- State Validation (Lamb, Goat, Swine) in the absence of ANR agent, Jennika Cantu completed.
- Duval Classic Prospect Show on November 12, 2016 at the Benavides Agriculture Barn in the absence of ANR agent, Jennika Cantu completed with assistance from Marisa Dimas.

**Results:** The Agriculture agent promoted and encouraged further education and interest about livestock projects throughout Duval County. Youth livestock exhibitors participated in both county level validations and major show validations to learn more about livestock projects. The promotion and advertisement has opened the eyes of other families who are interested showing livestock with their youth.

**Acknowledgment:** The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Duval County would like to thank and recognize the cooperation with the San Diego Rotary Fair Board and Freer Fair Board members for helping with assistance with livestock validations, providing agendas and minutes at fair association meetings, fair membership folders, and other validation materials.

**Future Program Activities:** The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service office plans on continuing the professional relationship with the San Diego Rotary and Freer Fair Board members.



### 2016 4-H Grows Plan

Developed by Travis Trevino, Duval Extension Agent- Ag

**Relevance:** The main identified issue, was maintaining and growing the 4H program in Duval County.

**Response:** The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Duval County participated, attended, and assisted with the following activities in order to address this relevant plan:

- **Duval 4H** - consists of 5 clubs are chartered every year: Benavides 4H, San Diego 4H, Mesquite 4H, Freer 4H and Duval 4H Shooting Club. Duval 4 H consists of 167 members, 142 youths and 25 adult/volunteers.
- **2016 District 12 Rifle match** - The Duval Extension Office helped host the District 12 Rifle Match in Benavides on April 30, 2016. There were approximately 109 4H member's who participated from District 12 this year.
- **2016 District 12 Archery Match** – The Duval Extension Office helped host the 2nd Annual District 12 Archery Match in Benavides on June 4, 2016. There were approximately 125 4H member's from District 12 who participated in the FITA and 3-D archery match.
- **2016 Duval 4H Shooting Club** –. The goal is to have them learn this life skill and they competed at the District 12 Shotgun Match held in Laredo in May 14, 2016. They also competed at the state games in San Antonio in July 20-23, 2016.
- **2016 Duval County Youth Cookoff** – first annual youth cookoff held at Duval County Park on May 21, 2016 3 teams competed and advanced to district level.
- **2016 Duval Shooting Sports Fundraiser** – The Duval Shooting Club helped hosted a fundraiser to benefit the Duval 4H Shooting Club on March 2016. The fundraiser raised approximately \$6500.00 from the sale of raffle tickets. The event was collaborated with the Americana Arms in Beeville, Texas.

**Results:** Duval County continues to develop and mentor youths to become responsible adult leaders. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Duval County will continue to support and recruit 4H members within our community.

## 4-H and Youth Development

**Acknowledgements:** The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Duval County would like to thank and recognize the cooperation of Commissioner David Garza and Sheriff Romeo Ramirez in their consistent sponsorship and support of all 4 H events.

**Future Program Activities:** Future program activities for Duval County 4-H Club include continued recruiting for new members. Also renew interest in food show and food challenge by hosting a county demonstration event during the month of April 2017.

# **Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Duval County**

---

## **Personnel**

- **Marisa Dimas**  
Health Extension  
Agent
- **Jennika Cantu**  
Secretary

## **Contact Us**

**Texas A&M AgriLife Extension  
131 West Main Street  
PO Box 486  
Benavides, Tx 78341**