

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION  
**SOUTH REGION**  
IMPACTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS



2018



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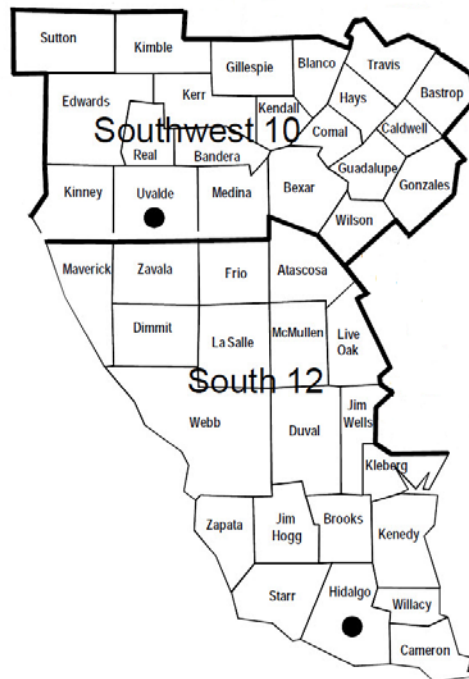
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# South Region Overview

The South Region consists of Districts 10 and 12 which are the southwest and southern districts in Texas for A&M AgriLife Extension. The South Region demographics include a total population of 5,669,802 with 59.89% Hispanics, 32.26% white, 5.31% African American, 1.16% Native American and 2.06% other. In addition, the South Region is comprised of 41 counties and supported by 2 District headquarters at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research & Extension Center in Uvalde (D10) and at Weslaco (D12). Also, the South Region has two urban counties who are designated a County Extension Director who oversee faculty and staff in Bexar and Travis County. Approximately, 110 County Agents, Specialty Agents and 50 program assistants work to provide program support and educational capacity in the South Region.



## Educational Contacts

- Total Contacts - 2,091,199
- Educational Events - 843,015
- Other Contacts - 1,248,184
- Educational Session Contact Hours – 1,802,146

## Volunteer #s

- Volunteers Involved – 83,299
- Volunteer Hours Contributed – 4,508,620
- Value of Volunteer Time - \$106,223,095 (\$25.15 per hour)
- Total Volunteer Contacts - 316,070

## Regional Team

- Todd Swift – Regional Program Leader - ANR and 4-H Youth Development
- Jana Osbourn – Regional Program Leader- FCH and 4-H Youth Development
- Michael Haynes – District Extension Administrator – District 10
- Dr. Ruben Saldana – District Extension Administrator – District 12
- Nelda Speller – County Extension Director – Bexar County
- Madelena Johnson – County Extension Director – Travis County

## Healthy Agriculture

AgriLife Extension teaches agricultural producers to adopt best management practices based on new scientific knowledge that will help them increase production, enhance sustainability, and conserve natural resources. And by educating the public about agriculture and food production, AgriLife Extension creates a partnership with all Texans that can improve food safety and security, reduce the prevalence of food deserts in our urban areas, and improve nutrition throughout the state.

### Accomplishments

- **Beef and Range Education** included **17 counties** in the South Region that conducted In-depth Beef and Rangeland educational programs. These programs reached total contacts of **21,935** through **4,819 educational events**. Of those educational events 4806 were *face to face* with 13 being *technology assisted*. Those completing evaluations (170) participants reported to see an economic benefit of **\$1 Million** and planned to adopt at least one of the best management practices covered in the programs. Evaluations indicated **92.9%** of producers increase knowledge in all areas. Some of the highlight Beef programs included six counties (Gillespie, Kerr, Kendall, Live Oak, McMullen, Jim Wells) working with specialists to offer the Beef 706 program to clientele. Landowners with larger acreages in Jim Wells Counties were offered the opportunity to participate in the “Rural Property Theft Prevention” program in collaboration with the Jim Wells County Sheriff’s Office. **126 landowners** participated in programs learning how to protect rural property and livestock from theft.

- **Crops and Forage** In 2018, **4,734 educational events** were conducted related to crops and forage reaching **48,701 contacts** through *face to face* and *technology assisted* delivery methods. 15 counties in the South have significant Cotton, Vegetable, Grains, and Forage crop production and participants estimated an economic impact of **\$11.7 Million** from producer participation in our programs. Eleven counties continued to work on **Sugar Cane Aphid education** as over **400,000 acres** of Grain Sorghum are planted in the Rio Grande Valley each year alone. Projected estimates of crop savings cumulative since 2014 from the educational efforts and the section 18 approval of pesticides are over **\$380 Million** in LRGV and Upper Gulf Coast.



• **Small Acreage Horticulture production** is thriving in the South Region. With subtropical climates, fertile soils, as well as the desire to fill food desert areas, the demand for Horticulture educational programs has been strong. **17 counties** offer **Master Gardener** programs to the clientele, who in turn assist with outreach and education of the public in Citrus fruit, Nut, and Vegetable production. Many of these are done on smaller acreages and backyard gardens. The South Texas Lawn and Garden Show hosted by a tri-county area had **2,600 participants** attend face to face educational sessions throughout the day. Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities and Learn, Grow, Eat, Go curriculum are used in 24 counties.



**\$ 2.245 Billion**  
**Total Annual Ag Income**

Top Six Enterprises:

- Beef Cattle \$987 million
- Hay Crops \$290 million
- Hunting \$279 million
- Vegetables \$209 million
- Cotton \$208 million
- Fruit and Nuts \$91 million

# Healthy Environment

Safeguarding our precious natural resources and maintaining a clean and healthy environment are among AgriLife Extension's top priorities. We promote sustainability in agricultural production, conduct conservation programs that reduce drought impacts, improve and preserve water quality, minimize wildfire risks, and help maximize water supplies through more efficient irrigation and conservation. We also help to promote the safe and reduced use of pesticides through the integrated pest management program.

## Accomplishments

- **Water quality and conservation** continues to be a major issue in the South Region. **23 counties** conducted events that reached adult and youth audiences in the areas of home landscape, well water screenings, and agriculture production. **72,815** total contacts related to water were made with **6,483 face-to-face** contacts at events including Rainwater Collection, Water Well Screenings, Rainfall Simulators, 40 Gallon Challenge, Irrigation Efficiency workshops, Master Gardener presentations, Healthy Streams, Aquaponics, and Earth-Kind. **7,427** youth participating in Water Fairs and water related education; returned surveys that reported **78.1%** had a **better understanding** of how an aquifer functioned; and **83%** said water conservation should be practiced by everyone. Agents reports social media contacts related to water reached **7.5 million individuals**.

- **Environmental Stewardship** programs held in **20 counties** reached **89,876** total educational contacts with **22,325** being *face to face* educational delivery. **1109** of these program sessions targeting small acreage or new landowners addressed sustainable agriculture, natural resource protection, and country living.

- **Earth-Kind** educational programs were presented at **10,929 face to face** educational events. **51,682** contacts were made with participants interested in Earth-Kind information. Total annual economic benefit of **\$303,518.00** as result of attendance.

- **Pesticide Safety** and Integrated Pest Management educational activities were offered in all **41 counties** in the South Region. **4,481** total contacts were made during **371 events** that offered pesticide applicator training or CEUs for license holders. Proper pesticide application is critical to both the environment and financial bottom line of landowners.





# Healthy People

Through a wide range of programs, AgriLife Extension educators help Texans take control of their own health to prevent and manage chronic diseases and conditions such as diabetes, asthma, and obesity; prevent infectious diseases; improve meal planning and food budgeting; increase physical activity; and improve food safety. With a new focus on health, Extension's goal is to reduce avoidable hospitalizations, health complications, and emergency room visits.

## Accomplishments

- **Better Living for Texans** programs reached **4,138 limited resource** participants from 28 counties. The series including Fresh Start to a Healthier You and Eat Smart, Live Strong helps improve their ability to plan and prepare nutritious, safe meals, stretch food dollars, and improve physical activity habits. Graduates reported a significant increase in vegetable and fruit consumption at the completion of the program series.

- **Expanded Food and Nutrition Programs** educated **5,294** Bexar, Cameron, Hidalgo, Travis and Willacy County limited resource **families** and **55,649 youth** on topics related to dietary quality, food resource management, food safety, and physical activity through a series of at least six lessons. **95.4%** of adults indicated positive change in any food group at exit, **76.4%** of adults indicated improvement in *Food Safety* practices, and **70.8%** of adults indicated improvement in *Food Resource Management* practices at completion of the 6-lesson series compared to entry.

- **Adult Nutrition/Health Programs** (Mobile Cooking School, Cooking Well for Healthy Blood Pressure, Maintain No Gain, Health Talk Express and Step Up Scale Down) provided busy families and individuals with quick, healthy, cost effective recipes. These nutrition/health programs involved **440 participants** in 12 counties. **45.6%** of graduates (157/359) *increased their fruit & vegetable intake* each day. **Dinner Tonight** cooking schools reached **1,258 participants** through **23 events** in 12 counties teaching healthy meal planning and preparation. Participants indicated an increase in ability to modify recipes to reduce calories (34.3%) and reduce sodium (32.3%).

- **Diabetes Education** provides basic nutrition and self-care management topics to help people with diabetes learn skills needed to manage their disease successfully. There were **389 participants** participating in one of four program series including Do Well, Be Well with Diabetes (107), Cooking Well with Diabetes (230), Si Yo Puedo Controlar Mi Diabetes (38) or Wisdom Power Control (14). The potential health-care cost savings and improved productivity resulting from better management of diabetes by participants is an estimated **\$14,552,684.50** for their remaining years of life.





- **Walk Across Texas** events engaged **17,842 individuals** including 3,194 adults and 14,648 youth participants representing 31 counties in the 8-week program. Over **1,061,000 miles** were logged by participants with the potential to save approximately **\$46 million** in future health care costs during the remaining years of their life if they maintain this level of physical activity.
- **Master Wellness Volunteers** from 5 counties extended outreach and education related to health, nutrition, food safety and family wellbeing. These **48** South Region MWVs provided **621.5 volunteer hours** reaching **4,538** Texans; value = **\$15,630.70** (\$25.15/hour).
- **Working on Wellness** utilizes a **social media platform** to deliver relevant health education in a way consumers want to learn. The **Path to the Plate** program helps participants establish healthy habits – physical activity, healthy diet, mental health, connect health to agriculture - in the 6 week challenge. **299 individuals** from 47 counties across 8 districts improved their health in at least 1 area. The program was developed by Stacy Drury and Emily Grant.
- **Food Protection Management** was developed to meet the need for quality food safety education in Texas retail food establishments. **532 individuals** in 13 counties completed the two-hour *Food Handler* program, which is accredited by the Department of State Health Services and trains front-line food service workers on basic principles of food safety. The 1- or 2-day *Food Protection Management* class prepares dietary managers to successfully complete the Certified Food Management exam. There were **62 participants** in 6 counties with an 84% (52/62) successfully completing the certification exam.
- **Child Passenger Safety** programs work to reduce deaths and injuries from motor vehicle crashes by increasing the proper use of child safety seats. In 2018, **145 safety seats** were inspected, and 112 new seats were distributed at no cost to families. By reducing the risk of injury and death which leads to reduced medical costs, avoidance of lost future earnings, and improved quality of life, the economic benefits are an estimated \$2,159 per child age 0 to 4 and \$2,606 per child age 4 to 7 for new seats distributed, and \$622 per child for seat misuse corrected with an assumed 75% continued use. Based on this formula, the total **economic impact** for the 145 inspections conducted in 2018 is **\$219,180**.
- **Child Care Provider Training** conferences in the South Region reached **276** providers and directors who care for **4,291 children** daily. A total of 1,932 clock hours of training were provided to professionals seeking to meet the state mandated requirements. According to evaluation data, **99.64%** (273/274) stated the training provided would help them become a *more effective* early childhood educator and *improve* the *quality* of the care provided for children in their program. **97.78%** (264/270) of participants indicated the training would help them obtain the hours needed to *maintain employment*.
- **Child Abuse Prevention Summit** is a multifaceted educational training designed to *equip* participants to strengthen families, *prevent child abuse* and develop innovative strategies to *improve outcomes* for at-risk children and families. In 2018, **196** participants attend the summit which is conducted by Medina and Uvalde Counties. A total of **462 CEU hours** were provided to nine separate licensing entities including CME, CNE, SW, CHES, LMFT, LPC, TCLOE and teachers.

# Healthy Youth Development

For over a century, AgriLife Extension has conducted youth development programs, including Texas 4-H, working in partnership with schools and youth organizations as well as with thousands of volunteers. Today, we offer hands-on learning experiences that help young people develop leadership, responsibility, and a spirit of service. Our goal is to ensure the health and well-being of our young people and to encourage them to be the leaders and motivators of tomorrow.

## Accomplishments

- **Learn, Grow, Eat, Go!** (LGEG) emphasizes science, math, language arts/reading, social studies and health through effective learning activities. LGEG is designed to engage children and their families in school gardens, vegetable recipe tastings, classroom activities and take-home stories. LGEG was implemented in **15 South Region counties** with **4,636 youth** participants. Statewide, there were increases in vegetable preferences, increase in water consumption and a decrease in screen time away from school. Student responses were significant in 2 areas of family engagement: planting more seeds or plants at home in a vegetable garden with their family and students/family gardening with others in community or school gardens. Finally, 69.7% reported the garden program made them want to come to school; 67.9% reported they felt gardening had made them a better math and science student; 65% reported they enjoyed gardening with their family; and 61.2% reported they had taught someone else how to make better food choices.

- **Rural Student Success Initiative** (RSSI) was grant funded in **Cameron, Dimmitt, Zavala** counties to increase the number of rural students enrolling in and completing a postsecondary certificate or degree program. County Extension Agents in these counties recruited school leaders and counselors, parents and community leaders to build a local team to implement a curricular framework to support all students and parents in Grades 8-12, and during the summer before their first day of college. Once in college, the Initiative will implement support strategies with students remotely and through on-campus visits to regional institutions.

- **Path to the Plate Youth Expos** are agriculture literacy events which were held in 3 South Region counties reaching **1,539 youth**. PTP events focused on teaching students where food comes from, how Texas ag producers grow the safest, most reliable food in the world, how agriculture is related to nutrition and health, and how ag producers protect our natural resources. Students indicated the following increases in knowledge: **89%** increased understanding the importance of eating a *healthy diet* and a *variety of food*; **79%** increased understanding the *path food production* takes to get to our plate; and **78%** increased understanding the way farmers and ranchers *produce the food we eat*.



• **4-H Family & Community Health projects** encompass a variety of projects including: Foods & Nutrition, Fashion & Interior Design, Health & Safety, Consumer Education and Photography. In 2018, over **50 FCH coalition meetings** were held to plan, implement and evaluate projects and contests. **3,109 4-H'ers** participated in FCH project meetings/workshops/tours (Foods & Nutrition-1,611; Fashion & Interior Design-585, Consumer Education-273 and Health, Safety, Photography-640) which were supported by **560 volunteer leaders**. Over **1,800 4-H members** participated in **County Contests**. The *Gillespie County 4-H Nutrition Quiz Bowl Team* won state 4-H Roundup and advanced to Nationals. At the National Western, the team **won 1<sup>st</sup>** in the FCS Quiz Bowl! *Jim Wells County* sent **3 4-H members** to the National Western. Two represented Texas in the Fashion Show and 1 represented Texas 4-H in the FCH Open Educational Presentations.



### South Region 4-H & Youth Development Enrollment

- Club Membership – 14,335
- Special Interest – 32,302
- School Enrichment – 112,105
- TOTAL MEMBERSHIP – 158,742
  
- Direct Adult Volunteers – 5,029
- Direct Youth Volunteers – 1,865

## Healthy South Texas

Shifting culture towards healthy living to reduce health disparities across the state is the focus for the 13 counties in the South Region which are part of the Healthy South Texas pilot project. Counties include: **Brooks, Cameron, Duval, Hidalgo, Jim Hogg, Jim Wells, Live Oak, Kleberg/Kenedy, Starr, Webb, Willacy and Zapata**. Working through local coalitions of volunteers, program partners, and organization/agency representatives, AgriLife Agents develop educational programs, services, events, and activities to meet and address the most critical health needs in each community.

### Accomplishments

- **Healthy South Texas Youth Ambassadors and Master Wellness Volunteers** in 13 counties in the South Region contributed to a state-wide total of 2,111 educational programs, food demonstrations, health fairs, planning meetings, program preparation and training events reaching 44,669 Texans. **44 HSTYAs** volunteered **1889.78 hours** from July 2018-May 2019 after participating in the South/Southeast HT/HST Youth Ambassador Summit in San Antonio. **112 youth** participated in the event on July 31, 2018.
- **Healthy South Texas Adult Nutrition** programs included *34 program series* (Cooking Well with Diabetes, Cooking Well for Healthy Blood Pressure, Maintain No Gain, Health Talk Express, Nutrition Series and Step Up Scale Down) and *23 Dinner Tonight Signature Events*. **2,864 individuals** graduated from these programs which taught nutrition, food safety, food preparation skills and promoted increasing physical activity. The programs which were implemented in all 13 D12 HST counties involved Master Wellness Volunteers, HST Youth Ambassadors and HST Coalition members.
- **Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities** focuses on increasing the availability of healthy foods, specifically fresh produce, through the planting and caring for **27 community gardens** in the 13-county area. Agents and Master Gardeners provide education to increase home gardens and promote farmers markets in the effort to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables.

- **Walk Across Texas!** Is the physical activity program designated Best Practice Physical Activity Program by the Texas Department of State Health Services for both *Adults* and *Youth*. WAT! was implemented in all 13 counties in partnership with county governments, school districts, businesses, cities, industry and colleges/universities. **16,280 youth and adults** logged **907,017 miles** in 2018!



- **Healthy South Texas Youth Nutrition**

programs involved multiple *Teacher In-Service trainings* which launched Learn Grow Eat Go!, Dinner Tonight Jr and Path to the Plate Youth Expos in all 13 HST counties. These programs reached over **6,700 youth** in partnership with numerous School Districts, Child Development Centers, After-School Programs and Community Centers.

- **HST Recognized School** program recognizes a school's commitment to supporting and encouraging students, staff and parents with healthy lifestyles thus creating a culture of health in that community. Schools must participate in a school-wide Walk Across Texas for youth and adults, at least one youth nutrition/health program in 2 classrooms and one or more adult nutrition/health programs for staff and parents. In 2018, **19 schools** in the South Region received this *distinguished recognition*. They are: Jim Wells County – Ben Bolt-Palito-Blanco High School and Premont Early College High School; Kenedy – Sarita Elementary; Kleberg – Santa Rosa Grades 3-8 Campus; Webb County – JW Arndt Elementary, Col. Santos Benavides Elementary, Borchers Elementary, Bonnie Garcia Elementary, Los Obispos Middle School, Nye Elementary, San Isidro Elementary, Washington Middle School; Willacy County – Lasara Elementary & High School, LC Smith Elementary; Zapata County – Zapata North Elementary.



- **Water Well Screening** was part of 7 Healthy South Texas Counties and 15 South Region Counties. Working together in multi-county clusters these groups offered private water well screening and well health education to landowners in Healthy South Texas Counties and others across the South Region. **Fifteen** total counties screened **355 water well samples**. Drinking *safe water* is key to *good health*.

- **Zika education and Vector Control** educational programs were offered in Webb, Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, Willacy, and Kennedy/Kleberg counties. Mosquito **surveillance and identification** of the *Aedes aegypti* and the *Aedes albopictus* was done in **14 South Region Counties**.



## About the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

*Extending Knowledge. Providing Solutions.*

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service strives to help all Texans learn and prosper from practical, research-based knowledge. With a statewide network that includes 252 county offices, extension educators and their more than 96,000 volunteers serve all 254 Texas counties, making some 25 million teaching contacts a year. Major outreach efforts include improving water quality and conservation, human health, and food systems. Our Texas 4-H Youth Development Program engages nearly 600,000 youth annually. Extension education provides a unique force for the betterment of Texas.

Learn more at [AgriLifeExtension.tamu.edu](http://AgriLifeExtension.tamu.edu) or follow us on Twitter at [@txextension](https://twitter.com/txextension).