



Agriculture

Cotton and Grain Pre-Plant Conference

RGV County Agents hosted a Cotton and Grain Pre-Plant Conference at Rio Farms in Monte Alto. Over 160 local producers attended this conference which featured many quality speakers from throughout the state. Some of the topics that were discussed were RGV Cotton Varieties, Cotton Market Updates, Nutrient and Weed Management, and the Boll Weevil Eradication Program. Several Agriculture industry representatives were also in attendance promoting their products.

Grain Sorghum Variety Trial

Cameron County Agriculture Agent planted a nine variety grain sorghum research demonstration plot in La Feria. Each of the 9 varieties were planted on 6 rows and replicated three times. Each variety will be measured for performance standards such as yield, bushel weight, and moisture content.



Cameron County Master Rancher Program

Cameron County Agriculture Extension Agent conducted the Master Rancher Program for local beef cattle producers. This program consisted of four monthly lessons which totaled over 16 hours of instruction. Some of the topics discussed were Introduction to USDA programs, Weed and Brush Control in Pasture/Rangeland, Establishment and Management of Pasture, Beef Herd Health and Reproduction Management, and Issues Affecting Landowners such as Water and Easements.

Horticulture

RGV Small Acreage

In 2020, over 300 people participated in Small Acreage Programs

Programs Included:

- Buzz on Bees: Part 1 - 29 participants & Buzz on Bees: Part 2 - 19 participants
- Livestock Workshop: 31 participants
- Goat Production: 42 participants
- Aquaponics/Hydroponics: 60 participants
- Fall Vegetable Gardening: 80 participants
- Healthy Lawns, Healthy Waters: 60 Participants
- Beef Cattle Production & Management: 52 participants

Participants anticipated an average of \$215 of Individual Economic Benefit from workshops.

Other notable efforts:

- Over 1,500 producers were notified and encouraged to apply to the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program through the USDA-Farm Service Agency
- Informed producers about the Economic Injury Disaster Loan from the Small Bus. Administration
- In 2020 the team received the Superior Service Award for work done to support small acreage operations in the RGV
- An Instagram account was created as an additional platform to share information and the website has increased traffic with over 3,200 views of educational videos. Social media accounts continue to elevate our online presence with the Facebook page having 553 followers and live streamed videos and recordings reaching an additional 2,193 people combined.

Master Gardeners

For the 2019-2020 class, 16 Master Gardener Interns completed the volunteer training course work and 50 hours of volunteer service hours and became certified Texas Master Gardeners.

This year 23 Master Gardener Interns participated in an Online Master Gardener Training Pilot Program and will continue to work on volunteer hours needed to complete course work.

- 74% of the participants believe they will have an economic impact due to the information received.

First Online Plant Sale: 80 Participants

Earth-Kind

In 2020, Master Gardeners provided Native Plant Tours, Vegetable Farm Tours, Citrus, Composting, Youth Vegetable Gardening, Adult Vegetable Gardening, Texas Superstars, Container Gardening, Palm Care and Maintenance, programs reaching over 560 participants. Master Gardeners also provided Weekly Horticulture Newspaper articles.

A total of 52 articles reaching approximately 95,000 weekly.

What's Blooming Wednesday Educational Videos were developed and shared via Facebook and YouTube reaching over 820 participants.

Coastal & Marine

Texas Coastal Naturalists

Our Texas Coastal Naturalist program held three refresher training courses for Red Tide Rangers at the UTRGV Coastal Studies Lab. The Rangers will be participating in a Gulf-wide grant, called "Every Beach Every Day" from NOAA (\$300K for 3 years) to expand and accurately forecast red tide bloom aerosol occurrence and intensity. This will allow the public to be able to enjoy beaches and inshore fishing areas not affected during red tide bloom, reducing its negative economic impact on coastal recreation. We fortunately have not experienced a red tide bloom since 2017. This year Coastal Naturalists were successful in bringing attention to brown pelican mortalities at the Carl "Joe" Gayman" crossing of the Bahia Grande supply channel. The Coastal Naturalists played a significant role by increasing public awareness of the situation. The result: TXDOT removed and replaced barriers along Highway 48 with caused deadly turbulence and mortality for numerous pelicans in past years. They were active in saving over 200 downed pelicans during strong northers, brought attention and resulting action by TXDOT who removed the hazard. A tragic upstate as of January 10: the strongest norther since the bridge modification brought down over 100 pelicans. 75 were rescued and the rest died on Highway 48

Texas Master Naturalists

In 2020, our South Texas Border and Rio Grande Valley Master Naturalists chapters, comprised of over 500 members, conducted 6,480 hours of volunteer service to our community valued at \$176,256, down more than 50% due to COVID. These chapters conducted educational programs for 1,463 adults and 404 youth. We published 4 newsletters, 24 articles, and over 360 Facebook posts. Two intern classes had 10 weeks of 12 classes and 10 field trips for each chapter, graduating 48 Master Naturalists. Class results from pre-tests and post-tests indicated an average of 15.2% increase in knowledge for the interns. The post-test revealed an 87% attitude change, 100% increased in skills, and 91% change in behavior. A huge success was the ability of the chapters to convert to online meetings and trainings

Cameron County Shrimp Fishery

The offshore shrimp fishery in Cameron County produces more shrimp annually than any port in Texas, averaging 12 million pounds valued at \$50 million. AgriLife Extension has played a key role in their success by introducing energy saving gear and bycatch reduction devices for fish and sea turtles. In 2020 we estimate fuel savings for our 180 vessel fleet at \$3.7 million, directly related to the fleet's adoption of fuel saving gear we introduced. Cambered doors and super fibers for trawls resulted in combined fuel savings of 25%. We continue to assist the industry with TED (Turtle Excluder Device) and BRD (Bycatch Reduction Device) compliance through dockside inspections abroad vessels. This year we began working on a major 6 year Bycatch Reduction Device Grant from NOAA. The 2020 shrimp season this year resulted in inconsistent production with slightly higher prices for the product. 2020 was a stormy year with numerous hurricanes and tropical storms driving our fleet back to port and reducing fishing time. There was a silver lining to this. After a storm, shrimp remain active for several days and our shrimp fishermen take advantage of this phenomenon and "clock" or fish around the clock rather than only at night, sometimes doubling their normal nightly production. In general, catch per unit effort was up. A significant problem kept some boats in the fleet from fishing this season. H2B fishing permits were down and foreign workers were not as available to as in past years to crew our vessels. Our inshore bait shrimp fleet benefitted from the increase in recreational fishing during the first round of COVID, as did our charter fleet, some with increased charters of 25%.



2020

Family & Community Health

Healthy South Texas

On the Road to Healthy Living Mobile Cooking School

In 2020, the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service conducted different programs such as On the Road to Healthy Living Mobile Cooking School, total attendance 30 people in which 17 participants completed the program.

Healthy Talk Express

Health Talk Express is a 30-minute presentation designed to raise awareness about chronic disease prevention. A total of 71 participants attended Health Talk Express presentations.

Cooking Well with Diabetes

A healthy cooking school designed to help people with diabetes consisted of 4 sessions, this program had a total of 58 participants

Online Programs

Because of Coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, I had to find new ways to continue offering our programs.

Parenting Connections

A total of 29 participants registered and 17 completed the program.

AgriLife.learn.tamu.edu

We offer a wide variety of online courses for professionals seeking to fulfill state mandate requirements. This year we had 13,495 childcare providers that completed different courses. Most popular courses were: Providing High-Quality Experiences in Emergency Child Care Settings during COVID-19 Year 2, Decision-Making about When and How to Operate Child Care Programs during COVID-19 Year 2, Navigating Child Care systems during COVID-19 Year 2.

Annual Child Care Conference

We had 15 participants and the speakers were from College Station, Weslaco and Edinburg.



2020

Family & Community Health

Harlingen CISD Family Plus Program

Throughout the 2020 year, over 396 Parent & Student participants from the Harlingen Consolidated School District/Harlingen Boys and Girls Club's Family P.L.U.S. program attended presentations wherein they learned about time management, stress management, and rules/rewards/consequences.



"I Cook" Virtual Cooking Class

There were over 30 families who took part in the "I Cook" virtual cooking classes and the CEP Cameron County Virtual Family Cooking Challenges (families were given 3 food items from the MyPlate food groups and were challenged to create their own recipe).



HCISD Lights on Afterschool Event

On October 22nd, CEP/FCH Agent Gloria Carter, facilitated a presentation on "Nutrition for Mental Health" during Harlingen CISD ACE's "Lights on Afterschool" program. Over 60 participants attended the session wherein they learned how eating from 5 different food groups aids in mental health and overall well-being.



2020

4-H & Youth Development

Leadership in 4-H

State Ambassadors representing Cameron County



Zachary Gray
Texas 4-H Water Ambassador



Avery Fohn
Texas 4-H Livestock Ambassador



Mackenzie Abrigo
Texas 4-H Shooting Ambassador



Community Service

One Day 4-H

Donated items to the Humane Society of Harlingen and we had an amazing turnout of items that we delivered

Thanksgiving Holiday Help

Donated Thanksgiving meals for 10 families in partnership with Texas Farm Bureau

Christmas Holiday Help

"Gifts for Teens" gift drive put on by RGV Credit Union

Although we were in the middle of a pandemic we were still able to show support in our community service projects and actually had a better turn out of participation than previous years.

(Pictures seen above.)



2020

CEP 4-H & Youth Development

Heroes 4 Health

The goals of the Youth Voice: Youth Choice 4-H Healthy Living grant provided by Wal-Mart are to mobilize underserved youth to take action around nutritional deficiencies, healthy food choices, and physical activity. This program was implemented using Choose Health: Food Fun and Fitness curriculum which focuses on nutritional lessons, food demonstrations, and physical fitness activities. The Heroes 4-Health program was implemented in the county through the combined efforts of the 1890 Cooperative Extension Program Family & Community Health Agent, Gloria Carter, and 4-H Youth Development Agent, Guadalupe Castro. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some classes resumed via online meeting platforms such as Zoom and via Facebook Live. A Family Cooking Challenge was held via Facebook challenging families to prepare recipes using 3 mystery ingredients from MyPlate as a method to keep youth and their families engaged by cooking together. Throughout the year, 1,249 participants were surveyed on increased knowledge and adopted behavioral change that lead to a healthy lifestyle. According to the program participant evaluation results, 97% of participants reported adopting a behavioral change by planning to prepare healthy food and snacks with family.



Growing U

Growing U program was established to address reducing childhood obesity, increasing vegetable consumption and improve children's fitness and weight and was funded by the Children, Youth, and Families at Risk Grant. The program combines interdisciplinary programs such as the Learn, Grow, Eat & Go! Curriculum, Walk Across Texas, and Junior Master Gardener Program to make an impact on children's behaviors related to childhood Obesity. Growing U was implemented in Sullivan Elementary in San Benito Texas as an after school program and all the participants registered as 4-H members in the Sullivan 4-H Club. Throughout the year the teachers taught the LGEG, Walk Across Texas, and JMG curriculum. As part of the students learning experience, they established one in ground vegetable garden and two garden beds in the Spring of 2020. Fall of 2020 had to be conducted virtually due to COVID19. The students were able to take home kits for their supplies. The students took various field trips in their community to learn about possibly careers in the field of agriculture in spring of 2020. Fall of 2020 was concentrated on creating an at home garden and starting new plants from seeds.



2020

Better Living For Texans




A Fresh Start to a Healthier You!

The 4-session nutrition program promotes fruit & vegetable intake, physical activity, food safety, and food resource management. Participants learn how to prepare low-cost and nutritious meals for themselves and their families.

 In 2020, there were  189 adult graduates 

Be Well, Live Well

The Live Well, Be Well nutrition program is targeted for adults 50+ years old and focuses in how to engage in a healthy lifestyle with nutrition education and physical activity.

 37 elderly adults completed the program

Walk N Talk/Walk Across Texas

The Walk N Talk program is designed to help establish regular physical activity. Over the 8-week period, participants learned about the benefits of fruits & vegetables and how they can include them in their diet. Participants kept track of all physical activity for the 8 weeks.



In 2020, 260 youth registered for the Walk N Talk Program. 124 youth graduated and 43 adult graduated. In June, the participants in the Walk Across Texas physical activity program walked over 1,300 miles.

Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities

The GNHC program is a 6 session course that provides information on growing vegetables and incorporating them into healthy lifestyle habits.



Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities Gardening Course was planned for 4 locations:

- Tropical Behavior Center
- The Salvation Army
- Cameron County Housing Authority
- Vermillion Elementary Parent Volunteer Group



Virtual educational one-shot programming and short gardening videos were conducted and shared via social media



A multi-county collaboration between Better Living for Texas agents Heidi Lopez (Starr County) and Andrea Torres-Barragan (Hidalgo County) was planned and initiating to meet virtual GNHC programming needs

Learn, Grow, Eat, Go!



The BLT curriculum series, Let's Grow, Eat, Go! is a 10 week program that incorporates gardening, nutrition, and physical activity and is specifically for youth grades 3rd through 5th.



Let's Grow, Eat, Go! program occurred at Rio Hondo Elementary in Rio Hondo and Judge Oscar De La Fuente Elementary in San Benito for grades (3rd-5th)



The overall goals are to help participants increase their consumption and access to fruits and vegetables, be more physically active, improve food security status, and prevent risk factors for chronic disease such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.

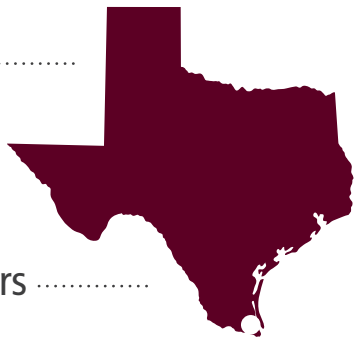
EXPANDED FOOD AND NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM

Educating Families since 1969

2020 // Cameron County Outreach

1,114
participants

4,805
family members



92%

made a positive
change in one or
more food groups



117 volunteers

3,032 hours
equals
\$77,225
in-kind
contribution



Adult Outreach

72% increased
physical activity behaviors



\$28
saved on
family's
monthly food
expenses



74%
practice better
food resource
management

MyPlate Practices



89%
changed diet
quality
behaviors



42%
increased
vegetable intake



77%
improved
food safety
practices

Youth Outreach



11,078
Kinder - 12th

87%

improved ability
to choose
healthy food

58%

improved safe
food handling
practices

57%

improved
physical activity
behaviors



Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program Cameron County

SUPPORTING TEXAS FAMILIES WITH GREATEST NEED SINCE 1969

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) helps young families and youth with limited resources – those most at risk to suffer from hunger, food insecurity and the inability to connect with available support systems. EFNEP offers practical lessons in basic nutrition, food preparation, food budget management and food safety in settings convenient for the participants. Program graduates reflect significant, lasting improvement in eating behaviors and healthy food habits. Texas has a need for EFNEP – 2019 data show that 16% of Texas families with children under the age of 18 were living below poverty level, compared to 14% of U.S. families.

EFNEP REACHES DIVERSE AUDIENCES

In Cameron County, ethnically diverse EFNEP nutrition assistants reach youth and adult groups whose principal language may be English or Spanish.

In 2020,

- 1,114 families enrolled in EFNEP
- 11,078 youth contacts were made through the EFNEP youth program
- 77% of EFNEP participants have children under the age of 19
- 44% of families were at or below 100% of federal poverty level
- 76% of families enrolled in one or more food assistance programs



EFNEP MAKES A REAL DIFFERENCE

Adult Program

Using “hands-on” experiences, EFNEP adult participants complete at least a six-lesson series on stretching food dollars, improving eating habits, and practicing food safety principles. As a result of participation in EFNEP participants will learn to: prepare more meals and snacks at home, be more active, control portion size and have more energy.

Youth Program

The EFNEP – Youth program is directed toward low-income school-age youth. These students participate in a series of fun and educational lessons on good nutrition and food safety as part of summer programs, classroom and after-school activities. Through fun and engaging activities youth learn to: build a healthy plate, set limits on sugar, fats and sodium, be active, food safety and to practice healthy behaviors.



COST-BENEFIT OF EFNEP

Studies have shown that for every \$1 spent on EFNEP, \$10 were estimated to be saved in health care costs and \$2 saved in food costs by participants. For Cameron County, this is \$3 million in estimated health care cost savings and almost \$616,986 in food costs.

VOLUNTEERS STRENGTHEN EFNEP

In 2020, 117 volunteers donated 3,032 hours of work to EFNEP in Cameron County. At the Texas rate of \$25.47/hr, this volunteerism has a minimum dollar value of \$77,225. Volunteers make a difference in their own communities, and contribute to EFNEP's continued success.

For more information visit efnep.tamu.edu.



TexasEFNEP



TX_EFNEP



Texas EFNEP

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