

Cooperative Extension Program Willacy County

2020 Program Highlights

Megan Rodriguez, Community & Economic Dev. Agent
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**PRAIRIE VIEW
A&M UNIVERSITY**
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Agriculture and Natural Resource

Willacy County had a good share of rainfall during the summer months from Hurricane Hanna that hit the lower Rio Grande Valley in July which caused over \$875 million in damages. Cattle producers have been taking advantage of baling hay and stocking up on supplies for the winter season. Cotton producers on the other hand took a huge loss as winds and rain destroyed most of the crop acreage in the county.

Two Highlighted programs for the year.

In June of this year, I hosted a **"Women in Ag Series Workshop"** with co-worker Mrs. Megan Rodriguez. We had over 100 participants in attendance over this zoom 3 series program. Topics included in our program were; Developing an Ag Business Plan, getting to know the USDA Farm Service Agency, USDA NRCS Programs & Updates, Property Insurance by the Texas Farm Bureau Insurance, Census of Women in Agriculture by USDA Agriculture Statistics Census, and Options for Business Structure by Center for Sustainable Agriculture & Rural Advancement, and learning about a local Women in ag who is a producer in the Valley.

In October, I hosted a program called **"Improving Forage Management Virtual Program"** over zoom as well. We had 30 attendees who participated in this program that featured topics in brush control where we highlighted tools, application process and methods, time of the season for spraying, and regulations. Pasture rainfall insurance and a decision-making tool was another topic that was highlighted. Dr. Samuel Zapata, Extension Specialist with the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension provided information that would give a producer a better opportunity to receive a higher return for his or their investment when setting up their insurance plan. And finally, Mr. Henry Gonzalez, USDA NRCS Conservationist-Willacy Co. presented information on programs and planning procedures that are involved with the USDA-NRCS when working on forage planning& farm design.



Community and Economic Development

2020 Willacy County CARES Small Business Grant Program

Willacy County recognized that the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic created an unprecedented negative economic impact on businesses around the globe. In an effort to provide financial relief to impacted local businesses, the Willacy County Judge's Administration created the COVID-19 Emergency Small Business Grant Program. This was a collaborative effort between the Willacy County Judge's Administration and Prairie View A&M Cooperative Extension Program Community and Economic Development Agent- Megan Rodriguez. This program was designed to help fund businesses or programs that creatively addressed a need to create, enhance, restore, or protect their Willacy County-based small business. During the development of the program, I assisted with the creation of the application and the grant intake process. A total of 18 complete applications were submitted and proceeded to the next steps in the funding process. A total of \$70,000 was disbursed to the small business owners. Judge Guerra allocated \$97,580 to the fund through the Willacy Counties coronavirus relief funds. This program provides grants ranging from \$2,500-\$5,000. The funds can be used to launch an online presence, replenishing inventory, delayed utility payments, rent for the business property, as well as PPE and sanitation supplies/equipment. The funds left over were used for mitigation preparation for future COVID-19 issues.



District 12 Judges & Commissioner CEU



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Willacy County

2020 Program Highlights

Gorgina Macias, Agriculture, and Natural
Resource & Youth Development
Perla Flores, Health Agent



Healthy South Texas

Physical

Activity Adults and Youth:

A total of 969 Youth
walked over 45,000 miles.



Youth Nutrition Education:

Lasara ISD and Raymondville ISD
implemented the Learn, Grow, Eat, & Go, Path to
the Plate and Choose Health, Food, Fun & Fitness
curriculum with 170 participants. All participants
were evaluated through pre and post-test and
behavioral changes were increased as the results
of the classes



Willacy County December 1, 2020-January 14,
2021. Since the Willacy County AgriLife
Extension agent position has been filled since
December 1, 2020, over 25 hours of program
planning, outreach, community involvement,
continuing education, and 4-H and youth
development have taken place and positively
impacted the county.

Agriculture and Natural Resource

Meeting with local farmers and producers has taken place to
introduce the new ag and natural resources agent and inform the
county of services and resources available to help agriculture
operations remain profitable and the best management practices for
long-term success. Along with introductions, feedback from
producers on educational needs for the county was received to
specifically target producers' needs for the coming growing season.
On January 14th, 2021 Texas A&M AgriLife Extension agents of
Willacy, Cameron, and Hidalgo Counties held the 27th annual Rio
Grande Valley cotton and grain pre-plant conference over zoom.
Many producers were from Willacy County and learned about
marketing strategies for 2021, pest management updates, continuing
education for safe and proper pesticide and herbicide applications,
weed management, planting rates, and variety selection.

Adults Nutrition Education:

A total of 428 participants
attended a
nutrition education classes
through Dinner Tonight
Cooking Schools with 153
participating; Cooking Well
with Diabetes had 235
participants;
Cooking Well for High and
Blood Pressure had 40
participants.



4H and Youth Development

In December the 4-H year was
already in full swing, but introductions,
livestock project site visits, and
4-H club and council meetings took place.
Individual livestock project site
visits took place to safely meet with many
involved members during the COVID-19
pandemic. While the 4-H club and council has
not had a chance to meet all
together in person, once it is safe to do so the
members plan to get involved
in recruitment opportunities in the schools
and community so that the 4-H
program can grow both in numbers and
opportunities. Soon, many members of the
Willacy County 4-H
Club and Council plan to show their projects at
the Willacy County Livestock
Show and Fair, and the Rio Grande Valley
Livestock Show. Over 30 projects are
planning to be shown in 13 different
categories, all with an opportunity to
earn scholarship money to further the success
of their future projects, and their education.