



## Agriculture & Natural Resources

### Agriculture

#### Cotton Result Demonstration

**Cameron County Agriculture Agent** planted a **10** variety Cotton Research Demonstration Trial south of La Feria. Each variety was planted on **6** rows with **40** inch spacing between the rows. The varieties were replicated three times in order to ensure the accuracy of the data. Each variety was harvested separately utilizing a round bale cotton picker that picks the cotton, forms the cotton into a round bale, and automatically wraps the bale in yellow wrapping. Cotton bales are weighed in pounds by the picker, and then samples are taken from each bale in order to measure performance data from each variety.

#### Rio Grande Valley 5 - Hour CEU Workshop

**Agriculture Agents from Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy counties** conducted a **5 - Hour CEU Workshop** for local pesticide applicators who were in need of continuing education units in order to renew their licenses. Participants included local agriculture producers, employees from various municipalities, and aerial applicators. There were over **70 people** who attended this in-person training that covered topics such as: *Integrated Pest Management of Vectors, Pesticides Used in Vegetable Production, Cotton Insect Management, Chemical Cotton Stalk Destruction, Spray Drift Management, and Safety for Aerial Application.*

#### Rio Grande Valley Bull Gain Test and Heifer Development Program

**Rio Grande Valley Agents** hosted the Bull Gain Test and Heifer Development Program at the Rio Beef Feedyard. This is a **112-day** gain test in which the bulls are divided by breed and then into four different age categories. Cattle Producers who participated in this program were able to acquire data on their livestock such as: Average Daily Gain, Hip Height, Scrotal Circumference, and a Sonogram was also conducted to measure the Rib Eye Area. Top performing bulls were given a breeding soundness exam and they were also allowed to enter an online sale at the conclusion of the program.



## Marine and Coastal Resources

#### Texas Master Naturalist

Brown pelican conservation has been a major focus of our Texas Coastal Naturalist program and Rio Grande Valley Chapter Texas Master Naturalists. Over **900 pelicans** have died on **Highway 48** at **Gayman bridge**. And **700 pelicans** were saved in the last six years, **50** in 2021. And aerodynamic barrier and flashing yellow warning lights were installed by TXDOT at the site to increase pelican survival. Master Naturalists also published a brochure to teach motorists about the plight of the pelican and slow down to increase survival.



#### Sea Turtle Rescue

Our volunteers also helped rescue **5,600** cold stunned sea turtles in last February's Winter Storm Uri. Agent Reisinger monitored water temperatures for NOAA to determine when the sea turtles could be released back into the water.

#### Volunteer Recognition

Twenty-year veteran RGV Master Naturalist Frank Wiseman and four others were recognized for outstanding service. Two Valley chapters contributed ~ **\$5 million** in 2021 volunteer time.

#### Sea Grant Intern

Last summer we hosted a Sea Grant intern, Shadrach Villafranca who assisted with fishing tournaments and checking shrimp vessel bycatch reduction devices BRDs in the Cameron County fleet. He planned a living shoreline for a site in Port Isabel. Two AgriLife interns assisted with the fishing tournaments teaching over **1,300 anglers** fish measuring, weighing and identification. The interns have all expressed interest in becoming weighmasters.



## Horticulture

#### RGV Small Acreage Program

Over **245** participants attended the RGV Small Acreage workshop series. Programs included: *Intro to New Organic Agriculture Programs, TDA Marketing and Nursery Floral License Update, Texas Tomatoes Economic Feasibility, Citrus Pest, and Disease Training, Bee Care, Freeze Damage Vineyard Assessment, Goat Workshop.* Since **2016**, participants estimated an economic benefit of **\$1,868** per farm (**\$40/acre**), or a total of **\$1.48 million**.



#### Earth-Kind

Master Gardeners provided native plant tours, vegetable tours, subtropical and tropical fruit tree, palm care and maintenance, and composting programs throughout the year. Master Gardeners maintained educational result demonstration at the Master Gardener Education Garden. Educational displays included vegetable gardening, composting, herb gardening, tree care, butterfly gardening, rainwater harvesting and propagating. Master Gardeners also provided weekly horticulture newspaper articles. A total of **52** Articles reaching approximately **95,000** readers weekly. Volunteers projects included Sunshine Haven Hospice and at the Los Fresnos Nature Park.



#### Master Gardeners Training Program

Alternative Master Gardener Training classes consisted of **35** hours of online instruction by Texas A&M AgriLife Specialists from across the State and **20** hours of local instruction to cover growing condition specific to our area. This program trained **11 New Master Volunteers**. Cameron County Master Gardeners and Interns completed **2260.58 service hours**. Additional online resources and publications were provided weekly. All participants indicated that they definitely will or have already adopted Earth-Kind Horticulture practices learned from the Master Gardener Training Program. **45%** of participants anticipate an economic benefit between **\$50** to **\$349** as a direct impact from the Master Gardener Training program.







2021

# 4-H & Youth Development

## Leadership

**The Cameron County 4-H Program has 3 Texas 4-H Ambassadors**

**Zachary Gray**

Texas 4-H Water Ambassador, Texas 4-H Photography



**Avery Fohn**

Texas 4-H Livestock Ambassador



**Ryleigh Greer**

Texas 4-H Livestock Ambassador



## 4-H Highlights

- Carissa Cantu placed Reserve Champion at the 2021 Utah Invitation Fashion Revue Contest in Construction
- 5 kids advanced to State for Record Books
- McKenzie Abrigo attended the 4-H National Shooting Sports contest in Nebraska as a Texas 4-H Shooting Sports Ambassador
- Senior livestock judging team placed 2nd at the D12 4-H Livestock Judging Contest
- Cody Farr received Senior High Point Individual at the D12 4-H Livestock Judging Contest
- Avery Fohn was elected as the D12 4-H 1st Vice President representing Cameron County for the 2021-2022 4-H year



2021

# CEP 4-H & Youth Development

## 4-H Highlights

4H & Youth Development CEP Agent **Guadalupe Castro-Ventura** trained **San Benito CISD Afterschool program** staff on the *Heroes 4-Health* program. Using a train-the-trainer method, Mrs. Castro-Ventura taught staff how to implement the Choose Health: Food, Fun and Fitness curriculum. Staff conducted the program with their students from September through December. Over **40 youth participants** were reached throughout San Benito CISD schools.





## Family & Community Health

Based on the State of Health Report in Cameron County **34%** adults reported to be in fair or poor health, Obese **31%** and Physical Inactive **25%**.

The programs **Cooking Well with Diabetes**, **Step Up, Scale Down** and **Walk Across Texas** were identified as educational approaches to address the overweight and obesity and Diabetes in the county.

### Step-Up-Scale-Down

Virtual-Set-Up Scale Down program was also a multicounty program. **87 total participants**.

In total, there were **35** participants graduated the program, participating in **75%** or more.

The Step Up, Scale Down Winter League completed **2,321.65 miles** through Walk Across Texas-Howdy Health.



### Cooking Well with Diabetes

Cooking Well with Diabetes was a multicounty program. **501 total participants** registered. The retrospective post Results **110** participants said they would use healthier fats on their recipes, **70** participants said they would improve sodium and fiber in their diet, and **63** would consume more vegetables.



### Childcare Conference

Virtual Childcare Conference (**Spanish**) a total of **69 clock hours** were given.

Childcare Conference- Fall (**English**) **32** registered participants. A total of **192 clock hours** were given.



## Family & Community Health

### Discover My Plate

Prairie View A&M University's Cooperative Extension Program, conducted a youth nutrition education program for **78** Pre-Kinder and Kindergarten students enrolled in the Harlingen CISD's Multi-Language Summer Program. Upon completion of the program, the students received a certificate of completion, an activity monitor, and a goodie bag with activity sheets to help keep them motivated to eat health and stay active at home.



### Heroes 4 Health

### Choose Health: Food, Fun & Fitness

**FCH Agent, Gloria Carter** conducted in-person nutrition and cooking lessons from the Choose Health: Food Fun and Fitness curriculum which focus on nutritional lessons, food demonstrations, and physical fitness activities. Classes were held San Benito Afterschool Programs at **La Encantada Elementary** (**24 participants**), **Frank Roberts Elementary** (**12 participants**), and for the **Harlingen CISD ACE Program**, (**17 participants**).



### Strengthening Families

The Strengthening Families curriculum was facilitated virtually to the parent volunteers of the Harlingen CISD Parental Involvement Department. **569** individuals learned how to build stronger, happier families. Lessons were facilitated in both English and Spanish.



Strengthening Families  
Foundation



## Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities

A total of **408** Cameron County adults participated in the **Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities Program**. Participants gained basic gardening knowledge and had a hands on experience with either container gardening or raised bed gardening. Virtual and face to face programs were held with **South Texas Afghanistan Iraq Veterans Association (STAIVA0 of Brownsville, Iglesia Cristiano Emmanuel San Benito, Brownsville ISD, Santa Maria ISD, Health and Human Services at Rio Grande State Center**.

## County Collaborations



A county collaboration with *Family and Community Health Agent Lilian Mezquida and Horticulture Agent Jennifer Herrera* was also held virtually with a total of **26 participants** where they learned how to grow, cook and harvest a highlighted herb.

A virtual multicounty collaboration with *Starr and Hidalgo County BLT agents* occurred with a total of **16 Cameron county participants** where basic gardening skills were introduced.

A multicounty virtual collaboration in Spanish, **"Huertos Familiares"** occurred in February of 2021 with BLT Agent *Heidi Lopez Starr County, BLT Agent Andrea T. Barragan Hidalgo County, and BLT Agent Kristina Loreda Cameron County* with **16 Cameron County participants**.

*Learn, Grow, Eat, & Go!* was a challenge during 2021 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and school district restrictions.



Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities Gardening Course was held as a face-to-face program with *South Texas Afghanistan Iraq Veterans Association (STAIVA) in Brownsville and Iglesia Cristiano Emmanuel in San Benito*.

Virtual programming was held in collaboration with *Perez Elementary of Brownsville Independent School District, Health and Human Services Commission at Rio Grande State Center in Harlingen, and with Santa Maria Independent School District*.

## Walk N Talk: Rethink Your Drink!

The eight-week physical activity program with a dialogue approach encourages those participating to increase physical activity while learning about healthy beverage options. Sessions were conducted virtually in collaboration with Brownsville ISD, Santa Maria ISD, and Santa Rosa ISD. A total of **31 adults** and **7 youth** completed the program.

## A Fresh Start to a Healthier You!



In 2021, a total of **285 adults** completed the nutrition program either **virtually** or **in person**. During the four sessions, participants learned about the importance of eating a variety of fruits and vegetables, increasing physical activity, and how to prepare nutritious meals while managing food dollars. In Cameron County, sessions were implemented by Esmeralda Avila, Nutrition Education Associate and Nidia Garcia, Extension Agent – Better Living for Texans.

## Choose Healthy



The youth nutrition program is targeted for middle-school aged children. The sessions focus on increasing fruit and vegetable intake, increasing physical activity, and making healthy beverage choices. **31 youth** completed the program.





**2021**

# Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program

## 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 percent** of Texas families with children under the **age of 18** were living below poverty level, compared to **14 percent** of U.S. families.

## EFNEP REACHES DIVERSE AUDIENCES

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

### In 2021:

- **993** families enrolled in **EFNEP**;
- **3,158** youth contacts were made through the **EFNEP** youth program;
- **81%** of EFNEP participants have children under the age of **19**;
- **66%** of families were at or below **100%** of federal poverty level; and
- **91%** 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 and 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 Texas, this is **\$43 million** in estimated health care cost savings and almost **\$8.6 million** in food costs.

## VOLUNTEERS STRENGTHEN EFNEP

In 2021, **38** volunteers donated **956** hours of work to **EFNEP** in Texas. At the Texas rate of **\$26.43/hr**, this volunteerism has a minimum dollar value of **\$25,267**. Volunteers make a difference in their own communities and contribute to **EFNEP's** continued success.

## SUCCESS STORIES



“Thanks for the information will be very help full for my family and have some options on every meal thanks Mrs. Dorado was very good class.”

–C. Salazar

“It was a very informative program and very helpful for me and my family. I already recommend the program for Gonzales Elementary School and thank for being on this school I get so impress how easy we are able to learn about nutrition was great information thanks.”

–L. Krause

