

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

FAMILY & COMMUNITY HEALTH HIDALGO COUNTY

2021



The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Hidalgo County Family & Community Health team consists of Dr. Andrea A. Valdez, CEA-FCH, Joanne Ureste-Armijo, CEA-FCH, Melissa De Leon, EA-EFNEP, Stephanie Bowman, EA-PVAM CEP and assisted by county staff, Linda Ramirez and Elzie Martinez. Program topics include nutrition, MyPlate for youth and adults, hands-on food demonstrations, physical activity, anger management and parenting skills, car seat installations and financial literacy.

ABOUT FAMILY & COMMUNITY HEALTH

IT'S ALL ABOUT BEING PREPARED



Andrea A. Valdez, Ph.D., M.P.H.

County Administrator, County Extension Agent-Family & Community Health

2021 brought Hidalgo County a historic Winter storm and thus highlighted the need for emergency preparedness and food preparation during emergencies. In partnership with the Hidalgo County Judge Richard Cortez, multiple school districts and municipalities, the *Cooking School for Emergencies* program educated citizens on how to prepare healthy food without electricity and plan to keep their families safe. Four community events hosted **138** in person participants with over **14,000** views via Facebook Live. The *Cooking School for Emergencies* program was highlighted State-wide by the Texas Association of Counties and *The Monitor* newspaper.

Mental health continues to be the top identified community need in Hidalgo County. The new *Stress Less with Mindfulness* program produced **18** graduates that learned basic mindfulness techniques to address their stress. The *Mindful May 2021* social media mental health campaign reached over **1,631** citizens with daily mindful reminders and breathing exercises.

KEEPING YOU AND YOUR FAMILY SAFE AND WELL



Joanne Ureste-Armijo, M.S.

County Extension Agent, Family & Community Health

This year, **123** citizens from Hidalgo County participated in the multi-county *Step Up, Scale Down/Walk Across Texas* combination program. During this program, participants learned how to manage their weight and develop sustainable fitness habits. Participants reported a **17%** percent increase in daily physical activity and a moderate increase in daily fruit intake after completion of this program. The *Parenting Connections/Anger Control* program logged over **150** class hours. The *Child Passenger Safety* Program yielded **92** inspections where **81** car seats were distributed while **57** children arrived incorrectly or unrestrained. The proper use of child safety seats reduces the risk of injury and death leading to reduced medical costs resulting in a total economic impact for 2021 of **\$166,386**.

Two multi-county *Child Care Conferences* were conducted with over **29** participants from Hidalgo County earning hours towards their licensing.

BALANCED LIVING



STEPHANIE BOWMAN, M.S.
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION AGENT-FAMILY & COMMUNITY HEALTH

The Family & Community Health programs of Prairie View A&M Cooperative Extension Program include a variety of new programs such as *Setting the Table for Healthy Eating*, *Manage Your Stress*, and *Heroes for Health*. Multiple partnership were utilized during the year including Donna ISD, the Boys & Girls Clubs of San Juan, South Pharr and Mercedes, Pharr Housing Authority, Hidalgo County Head Start, and Bebo's Angels. **734** youth in at the Boys & Girls Club (all locations) learned how diet and activity-related behaviors encourage a healthy weight and lifestyle, including reducing the consumption of sugary drinks and high fat foods, and increasing the consumption of fruits and vegetables. **107** Hidalgo County Head Start employees received a virtual workshop entitled "*Three Keys to Successful Saving*" where participants were encouraged to set financial smart goals and create a spending plan.



HEALTHY HABITS



MELISSA DE LEON, M.S.
EXTENSION AGENT
EFNEP

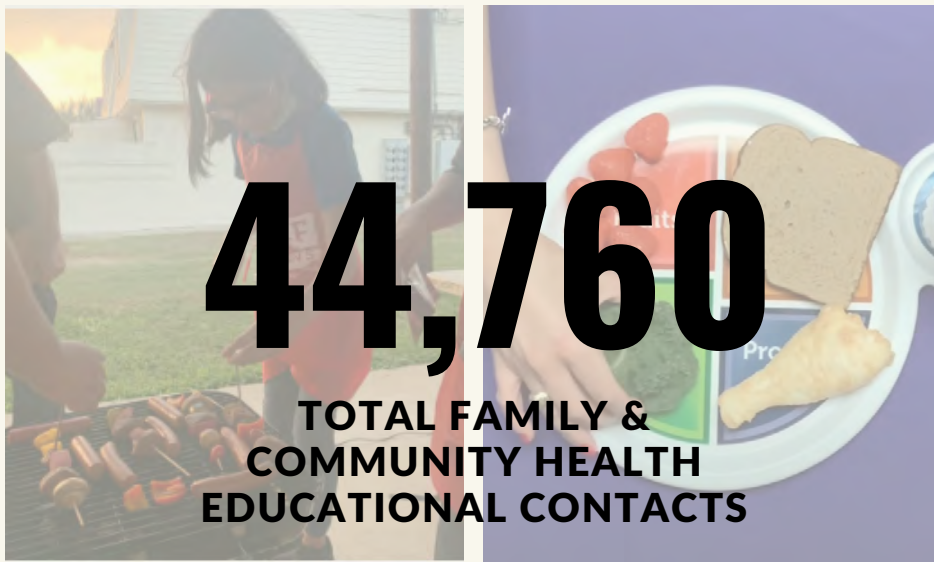
The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) provides educational classes to limited-resource adults with children on topics related to dietary quality, food resource management, food safety, and physical activity through a series of, at least six nutrition education lessons. In addition to offering "hands-on" groups settings, several virtual group classes were offered due to COVID-19. Online Self-Paced and Phone Script lesson sessions offered had **363** (82% of 441) participants who completed the series of EFNEP learning sessions on stretching food dollars, improving eating habits, and practicing food safety principles. Of those graduates, **331** clients were surveyed to determine the following food and nutrition-related behavior changes:

- **97%** (321 Adults) showed improvement in one/more diet quality practices - ate more fruits & vegetables, drank regular soda and sweetened beverages less often.
- **95%** (314 Adults) had improvement in one or more food resource management practices.

In addition, Hidalgo County's EFNEP faculty enrolled **20,975** youths; of which, **20,201** youth contacts were graduates during the Fiscal Year 2020-21. Of those **20,201** graduates, **538** youths were sampled to determine the following food and nutrition-related behavior changes:

- **92%** (495 Youths) showed improvement to choose more foods according to Dietary Guidelines or gained knowledge practices – ate more fruits and vegetables, drank regular soda and sweetened beverages less often.
- **70%** (377 Youths) showed improvement in use if safe food resource handling practices more often or gained knowledge.

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.



2021 Hidalgo County Agriculture and Natural Resources

Commercial Agriculture



RGV Bull Gain Test & Heifer Development Program

A total of 1,693 bulls and 1,114 heifers have been entered in the 23 years the program has been conducted. A **Reproductive Management Program** was this year's beef educational event that was held at the Texas A&M Higher Education Center in McAllen, Texas on July 8, 2021. Topics included: Herd Health Management, Selecting Replacement Heifers, How Much Can I Afford For a Bull? Increasing Reproductive Efficiency and the Economic Impact of Open Cows. There were 80 beef cattle producers in attendance from throughout the Rio Grande Valley and we secured \$950 from program sponsors to provide the event.

27 consignors brought in 84 bulls and 4 heifers to participate in performance testing at the 23rd Annual RGV Bull Gain Test & Heifer Development Program in 2021.

Hidalgo, Cameron, Willacy, Starr Crop Production Program

Research demonstrations on four producer farms were conducted to produce an unbiased source of performance data that are used by growers to determine the most profitable varieties and farm practices for their area. These demonstrations included crop varieties trials for cotton, corn, grain sorghum and a seeding rate trial for grain sorghum. This information was shared with producers at the Virtual 27th Annual RGV Cotton & Grain Pre-Plant Conference that was held via Zoom on January 14, 2021. This information helped farmers make informed decisions for purchasing seed at the start of the 2021 crop season.

27th Annual Virtual RGV Cotton & Grain Pre-Plant Conference

This program was held on January 14, 2021. There were 108 producers who attended from the four RGV counties. Evaluation results showed a 74% increase in the level of understanding of the introduced topics. 99% of respondents were mostly or completely satisfied with the activity and 93% of the respondents anticipate benefitting economically as a direct result of what they learned from the Extension activity. 100% of the respondents said they would recommend this activity to others.

Topics Included: Weed Competition as it Relates to Nutrient Availability, Planting Rates & Variety Selection in Cotton, Update on Corn & Sorghum Cropping Systems, Herbicide Tolerant Traits in Sorghum and Pest Management Strategies in Row Crops.

Four hours of CEU's were given to TDA pesticide license holders at this event.

Small Acreage Agriculture



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 After Freeze, RGV Freeze Damage Vineyard Assessment, Increasing Small Ruminant Production Goat Workshop. **Since 2016, participants estimated an economic benefit of \$1,868 per farm (\$40/acre), or a total of \$1.48 million.**

Horticulture



We have worked with our Cooperative Extension Program Advisory Committee as well as our program area committee by identifying county-based issues addressing livestock management programs. Workshops, field days, demonstrations, and one-on-one sessions were designed to increase knowledge gain of agriculture producers by making them aware of programs that can help them compete in today's agriculture industry.

EarthKind Workshop Series

- 24 workshops were hosted reaching 583 people on a variety of Gardening Topics
- 200 people supported our Fall Plant Sale raising over \$6,000 for the Hidalgo County Master Gardener Association
- 26 gardening articles were written for the "Garden View" bi-weekly column published in the Monitor. (circulation: 35,000)

Master Gardener Training

We continued to use the hybrid training with 35 hours of online class and 20 hours of local instruction with 50 hours of hands-on volunteer time.

- 15 new volunteers graduated in 2021
- 14 people participated in the 2021 training
- 38 MGs volunteered 1,660 hours

- **"Beef Cattle Luncheon Series Program May 10th, 2021, 34 Participants**
- **"Livestock Nutrition Program" on June 10th, 2021, 20 Participants**
- **"RGV Bull Gain Test & Heifer Development Program" on October 6th, 2021, 27 consigners**
- **Starr County Fall Ranchers Program" held in San Isidro, Texas on October 29th, 2021**
- **60 participants**
- **Beef Cattle Production Management Program:**



2021

HIDALGO COUNTY 4-H & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



*"To Make The
Best Better"*

Welcome To The Club!



**20
421
84**

**CHARTERED
COMMUNITY CLUBS**

YOUTH MEMBERS

**ADULT
VOLUNTEERS**



For the 2021-2022 4-H Program year, our members held and participated in a county wide fairgrounds clean up for the Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show. During this clean up our members collected (3) 30 gallon bags of trash, 2 large cardboard boxes, and (1) 30 gallon bag of aluminum cans. Our 4-H Ambassadors organized a Service day at the Food Bank at First Baptist Church in Weslaco. They helped sort cans and prepare packages for distribution. The Hidalgo County 4-H Clubs hold multiple community service events year-round!



4-H Means Service



Workshops and County Contests

Multiple educational workshops were held to promote 4-H projects during the year. 2 Safety Around the Kitchen Workshops worked to increase youth's knowledge in both kitchen and knife safety. We had a total of 41 4-H members attend which resulted in 8 individuals and 1 competing in the District 12 4-H Food Show & Food Challenge Contest, respectively.



The Consumer Decision Making workshops sparked the interest of 15 youth members with 4 teams competing at the District 12 4-H Consumer Decision Making contest. The 4-H Senior team will be advancing to the 2022 State Roundup Competition in June 2022!



Workshops are not just for kids! The Hidalgo County 4-H Club Managers participated in a one-day workshop refresh of best financial practices, fundraising, and how to engage our youth!



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2021 HIDALGO COUNTY BETTER LIVING FOR TEXANS



Andrea Torres-Barragán - BLT Extension Agent
Roy Custodio & Ricardo Carranza - Program Assistants

Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities

GNHC is the gardening program of BLT that aims to teach people how to grow fruits and vegetables in communities that are located in food deserts and/or food insecurity areas. 204 lesson series were delivered (104 virtually) with a total of 213 participants completing the series.

Despite COVID-19, a total of 3,018 lbs. of produce were harvested from ten community gardens during Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 seasons. . Tomatoes (617 lb.), and Bokchoi (352 lb.) were the vegetables most harvested.

- 91% of participants reported to serve vegetables at meals, often or almost always, after the program.
- 76.5% of participants reported to serve fruit for desert, often or almost always, after the program.
- 97% of participants reported to have fresh fruit on the counter or other available location ready to eat, often or almost always, after the program.



Preserving the Harvest

Preserving the harvest is a program teaching techniques for home food preservation, specifically of fruits and vegetables harvested at community and home gardens to give participants more options of healthy food and increase their food security status. 35 lesson series were delivered with a total of 68 participants completing the series.

- Before the program 89% of participants reported their knowledge and skills about home food preservation was poor/fair and after the program the same percentage reported their knowledge being good/excellent.
- 78% of participants are planning to take actions and changes in their nutrition as a result of the program.



Clase # 2

Deshidratado de frutas y vegetales en casa



Learn, Grow, Eat, GO!

The LGEG program is an excellent program that teaches children and their families how to grow their own fruits and vegetables, which in turn increases their access to fresh produce and more physical activity. 629 children participated in this program which represents a total of 5,230 contact hours.

- 82% of the children eat more salad and green vegetables at least once a day.
- 92% of the children eat colorful vegetables at least once a day.
- 70% of the children eat fruit at least once a day.
- 91% of the children reported to practice at least 30 minutes of physical activity after the program.



2021 HIDALGO COUNTY BETTER LIVING FOR TEXANS

Karen Cantú - BLT Extension Agent



Choose Healthy

Choose Healthy an interactive nutrition program geared towards motivating students to make healthier choices in regard to food, drink and physical activity. 79 youth completed the program.

- 40.6% of students eat 3 or more vegetables a day since completing the program.
- 58.4% of students eat 2 or more fruits a day since completing the program.
- 30.3% of students reported going outside for physical activity 3-4 times in the past week compared to 22.4% before the program.



A Fresh Start to a Healthier You!

FSHY is a nutrition series focuses on improving fruit and vegetable intake, meal planning, increasing physical activity, and adopting selected behaviors that can reduce the risk of food-borne illnesses. 13 adults completed the program.

- 66.7% of participants eat vegetables at least once a day since completing the program.
- 66.7% of participants eat fruit at least once a day since completing the program.
- 83.3% of participants say they now "always" or "most of the time" use a grocery list when they go grocery shopping.

Healthy Carbohydrates

Healthy Carbohydrates is a nutrition series that promotes a healthful eating pattern to prevent or delay diet related chronic diseases. 19 adults completed the program.

- 46% of participants say they now eat non-starchy vegetables 2 times a day after completing the program.
- 46% of participants now eat starchy vegetables less than 1 time a day or a couple times a week.
- 53% of participants say they now eat fruits 1 time a day after completing the program.



Walk N Talk

WNT is a physical activity program focuses on increasing physical activity while discussing the benefits of fruits and vegetables. 7 adults completed the program with 490 miles walked.

- Participants increased their physical activity per week in the last month from 3 times per week to 3.5 times per week with an increase of 16.7%.
- 50% of participants say they now fill their plate at least three-fourths with vegetables and fruits after completing the program.
- 50% of participants eat vegetables at least 3 times to 4 times per day after completing the program.
- 100% of participants eat fruits at least 2 times or more per day after completing the program.

