

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

FAMILY & COMMUNITY HEALTH HIDALGO COUNTY



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ABOUT FAMILY & COMMUNITY HEALTH

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Hidalgo County Family & Community Health team consists of Dr. Andréa A. Valdez, CEA-FCH, Joanne Ureste-Armijo, CEA-FCH, and Melissa De Leon, EA-EFNEP. Program topics include nutrition, diabetes education, mental health, MyPlate for youth and adults, physical activity, anger management and parenting skills, car seat installations and financial literacy.

MENTAL HEALTH "IT'S OK TO NOT BE OK"



Andréa A. Valdez, Ph.D., M.P.H.

County Administrator, County Extension Agent-Family & Community Health

The Center for Disease Control released a study in August 2020 that showed that over **40% of adults in the US reported struggling with mental health challenges**. In Hidalgo County, the **average number of days per month that adults felt mentally unhealthy was 4.6** (countyhealthrankings.org). In 2022, mental health programming was conducted for both adults and youth. **Stress Less with Mindfulness** for adults reached **62** participants, while **Mindful Self** for youth reached **148** youth in partnership with **Mission CISD**.

Through the Hidalgo County Mental Health Coalition, new partnerships were formed with teachers and counselors being trained on these mental health programs to implement in their schools.

Health programs such as **Cooking Well with Diabetes** and **Dinner Tonight Healthy Cooking School** continue to be implemented to address chronic disease through diabetes education and teaching participants healthy recipes, food safety, and cooking techniques. In 2022, the previous Cooking for Emergencies program was adopted at the State level as **Dinner Tonight Emergency Preparedness** to be available to agents throughout the state. As part of the Dinner Tonight State Team, Dr. Valdez created recipes and content shared on social media reaching over **18,000 people**.

STRONG PEOPLE, STRONG BODIES TIME TO GET MOVING



Joanne Ureste-Armijo, M.S.

County Extension Agent, Family & Community Health

County Health Rankings.org reports that in 2022, **37 % of adults in Hidalgo County are physically inactive** and **34% of adults report being in poor health**. The **Strong People, Strong Bodies** program is a strength training program aimed at improving the health of adults by increasing access to strength training. Of the **22** participants of this program, **12 were able to lower their weight** and **15 improved their flexibility**. To promote health and provide education on dietary habits, the **Step Up, Scale Down** program reached **63** individuals with **80% of the them reporting improvement in their general health**. Through the **Walk Across Texas** program which encourages physical activity through tracking walking mileage, **57** Hidalgo County residents walked a total of **8,563 miles!** Through this establishment of a physical activity habit, the **potential economic impact for the Walk Across Texas program in 2022 is \$414,261**. The **Master Clothing Volunteer (MCV)** program provides opportunities for personal growth and home-based business skill development. The MCV program has **38** volunteers with **1,118** class participants and **608** community service hours in Hidalgo County. As part of the **Child Passenger Safety** program, **67** car seats were inspected with **56** car seats were distributed to those in need with an **economic benefit of \$121,940**.

HEALTHY HABITS

MELISSA DE LEON, M.S.

EXTENSION AGENT-EXPANDED FOOD & NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM



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 **674 (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, **349** clients were surveyed to determine the following food and nutrition-related behavior changes:

- **97%** (349 Adults) showed improvement in one/more diet quality practices - ate more fruits & vegetables, drank regular soda and sweetened beverages less often.
- **95%** (292 Adults) had improvement in one or more food resource management practices.

In addition, Hidalgo County's EFNEP faculty enrolled **11,270** youths; of which, **9,305** youth contacts were graduates during the Fiscal Year 2021-2022. Of those graduates, **1,741** youths were sampled to determine the following food and nutrition-related behavior changes:

- **67%** showed improvement in one or more diet quality practices – ate more fruits and vegetables, drank regular soda and sweetened beverages less often.
- **41%** showed improvement in use of 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 **\$45 million** in estimated health care cost savings and almost **\$9 million** in food costs.



2022 PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS



Dinner Tonight Emergency Preparedness released State-wide



Strong, People, Strong Bodies program participant



EFNEP adult program graduation



Master Clothing Volunteer Program



Mindful Self program youth participant

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

2022 Hidalgo County Agriculture and Natural Resources

Home Horticulture and Small Acreage



2022 MG Graduation

HIDALGO COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

- 13 people participated in the 2022 MG Volunteer Training
- 10 new volunteers graduated and joined the association
- \$12,000+ raised for educational programs
- Current membership: 80 volunteers



3,295 HOURS VOLUNTEERED

VALUED AT \$89,624



2022 MG Training Field Trip

EARTH-KIND WORKSHOP SERIES

- 32 Earth-kind workshops and events
- 621 workshop participants
 - 96% reported an increase in knowledge
 - 73% planned to apply what they learned
- 700 + contacts at outreach events
- 21 gardening articles written for "The Monitor"



Gardening 101 Class

RGV SMALL ACREAGE SERIES

- Over 334 participants attended workshops
- 88.2% (n=133) planned to adopt what they learned
- Participants (n=133) estimated an average economic benefit of \$1,162,005.
- Since 2016 there has been a total combined economic benefit of \$4.12 million.



TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

2022 Hidalgo County Agriculture and Natural Resources

RGV Bull Gain Test and Heifer Development Program

The Bull Gain Test is a 112-day performance gain test where bulls are placed on a concentrated feed ration at Rio Beef Feed yard. Consignors of the program can acquire data on their livestock that includes average daily gain, hip height, scrotal circumference and a sonogram to measure ribeye area. Consignors who had top-performing bulls were given awards at a beef cattle educational program held on April 7, 2022



RGV Bull Gain Test

- 1,765 bulls and 1,136 heifers have been entered in the 24 years of the program
- In 2022, 74 bulls and 22 heifers were entered into the Gain Test by 27 ranches
- A Beef Cattle Production Workshop was held on April 7, 2022, with 50 participants in attendance
- A Pasture, Range and Forage Workshop was held on September 15, 2022, with 67 participants in attendance
- \$532,800 was the estimated economic impact of the 74 bulls entered into the gain test during their next 5 years in the cow herds they will service



Beef Cattle Production

Hidalgo, Cameron, Willacy & Starr Crop Production

- Four crop variety trials conducted in Hidalgo County included corn, cotton, grain sorghum and sunflowers
- 28th Annual Cotton and Grain Pre-Plant Conference was held on January 13, 2022. 110 producers in attendance
- Cotton & Grain Scout School was held on May 11 with 30 producers
- Fike Farms Field Day in May had 32 producers in attendance
- RGV 5-Hour CEU Workshop in November with 80 producers
- During 2022, we provided a total of 22 hours or CEU's to pesticide license holders



Fike Farm's Field Day



HIDALGO COUNTY 4-H & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



4-H = LEADERSHIP & CITIZENSHIP

ELECTED OFFICIALS AND SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

For the 2022 4-H Program year, the Agent Team collaborated with Hidalgo County Precinct 4 Commissioner Ellie Torres, Judge Renee Rodriguez-Betancourt, and McAllen ISD School Board Member Sofia Pena. Each collaboration was unique to the Hidalgo County 4-H Program and brought forth greater opportunities. The collaboration with Commissioner Ellie Torres promoted literacy in an underserved and rural area in Hidalgo County through the construction of a Free Little Library. Judge Renee Rodriguez-Betancourt was our key speaker for the newly elected county council officer meeting. Judge Betancourt led a presentation on leadership and teamwork. Lastly, Ms. Sofia Pena was the 4-H Achievement Night keynote speaker recognizing the leadership, challenges, and resiliency of 4-H youth.

— WELCOME TO THE CLUB! —



486
4-H CLUB MEMBERS



21
4-H CHARTERED CLUBS



59
SCREENED ADULT VOLUNTEERS

"To Make The Best Better"

WORKSHOPS AND CONTESTS

FOOD SHOW & FOOD CHALLENGE

Multiple educational workshops were held to promote 4-H projects during the year. The 2 Cooking in the Kitchen Workshops worked to increase youth's knowledge in both kitchen and knife safety. We had a total of **47** members and **5** adults participate in the workshops. This year we had a total of **8** members compete at the District 12 4-H Food Show Contest and a total of **4** teams compete at the District 12 4-H Food Challenge Contest.



CONSUMER DECISION MAKING

Due to continued interest and growth in the Consumer Decision Making 4-H project, the Agent Team focused heavily on increasing workshops and curating a county level contest for members. A total of **23** members and **4** adults participated in the county workshops and a total of **22** competed in our first county level invitational contest. We had a total of **21** members compete at the District 12 4-H Contest with a senior team advancing to State Texas 4-H Roundup.

4-H ACHIEVEMENT NIGHT

With **115** individuals in attendance, the Agent Team brought everyone back in person for an end of year recognition event for members, adult leaders, volunteers, and partnerships.

HIDALGO COUNTY 4-H PROGRAM
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION
SERVICE- HIDALGO COUNTY

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HIDALGO COUNTY 4-H EXTENSION AGENT TEAM:

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 Vidal Saenz, CEA- ANR
 Joanne Ureste- Armijo, CEA- FCH
 Ashley Gregory, CEA- Hort

2022

BETTER LIVING FOR TEXANS HIDALGO COUNTY

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

Better Living for Texans Gardening Programs

Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities (GNHC), Preserving the Harvest, and Learn, Grow, Eat & GO! programs have been fruitful in 2022. Gardening education and hands-on trainings are used to teach individuals how to cultivate their own fruits and vegetables in communities where food insecurity is prevalent in Hidalgo County. These programs encourage participants to garden at home for easy accessibility to fruits and vegetables. Participants receive nutrition education on how to prepare unfamiliar produce using healthy and budget friendly recipes.



Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities

During October 2021 and September 2022, 1249 lessons were delivered with a total of 221 graduates. It was reported that 83% of participants had Good or Excellent knowledge of gardening practices. Participants also made significant improvements with having fruit available for snacks (88%), serving vegetables at meals (90%), and having fruits and vegetables at home (95%).

Preserving the Harvest

During October 2021 and September 2022, 18 lessons series of preserving the harvest were delivered with a total of 52 participants completing the series. All of them cited that will use what they have learned in the lessons at home.

Learn, Grow, Eat & GO!

During October 2021 and September 2022, 403 children participated in this program and 47 teachers were trained. This represents a total of 4,398 contact hours. The program was mainly delivered virtually and hybrid due to COVID-19 restrictions. 92 children participated on Early Childhood LGEG (ages 4-5) and 311 on LGEG (ages 6-12). It was reported that 83% of participants enjoyed gardening and 63% reported to have gardened at home or in a community garden. There was an increase in their attitude towards the consumption of fruits and vegetables at home. 88% of children ate more green vegetables and colorful vegetables. And it was reported that 100% of children aged 4-5 were more willing to taste fruits and vegetables and increased physical activity after the program.

3376

pounds of
produce were
harvested in
10 community
gardens

2022

BETTER LIVING FOR TEXANS HIDALGO COUNTY

Karen Cantú - BLT Extension Agent

Better Living for Texans Nutrition & Physical Activity Programs

In the fiscal year of October 2021 - September 2022, the Choose Healthy, A Fresh Start to a Healthier You!, Get the Facts, Healthy Carbohydrates, Be Well, Live Well and Walk N Talk programs have been very successful. The BLT program enhances participants knowledge to help improve their ability to increase their consumption of 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.



A Fresh Start to a Healthier You!

The FSHY program focuses on food safety, basic nutrition of MyPlate, saving money at the grocery store and consuming more fruits and vegetables. This year, **87** participants graduated from the program. Surveys reported that **75%** of participants Often or Always use a grocery list when they go shopping and Often or Always compare unit prices before buying food.

Healthy Carbohydrates

The Healthy Carbohydrates program educates participants on creating healthier eating patterns to reduce the risk of chronic diseases. A total of **78** participants completed and graduated from the program. Participants made significant improvement of Often or Always drinking low-fat milk at **61%**. Participants also demonstrated an increase in their moderate physical activities to **3** days.

Walk N Talk

The Walk N Talk - Fruits & Vegetables program is a 8-session program focused on increasing physical activity while discussing the benefits of fruits and vegetables. **25** adults completed the program with **743.8** miles walked. **79%** of participants reported eating fruit 2 or more times a day. It was also reported that **95%** of participants participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity.

Choose Healthy

Choose Healthy is a youth program designed to address childhood nutrition. This year, **118** youth participants graduated from the series. It was reported that students increased their fruit and vegetable intake to two or more a day, they reduced the amount spent on electronics to **2.5** hours a day and **89%** considered their health to be Very Good or Excellent after the program.

Get the Facts

The Get the Facts program focuses on the aspects of the nutrition facts label: portion sizes, fats, sodium and sugar. **61** adults completed the 4-session program. Participants reported that **96%** of them Often or Always use food labels to select foods that are better for their health and Often or Always look at the serving size on a food label.

Be Well, Live Well

The Be Well, Live Well program is a program intended for older adults (50+). This program helps participants enhance their knowledge and skills related to nutrition, reducing risk for disease, and being physically active. This program had **29** adults complete the program. Participants increased their moderate activity to **4.3** days a week. **100%** of participants Often or Always throw out food that is nearing the "use-by" or "sell-by" date.

280
Adult Graduates!
118
Youth Graduates!