

**ABOUT
 FAMILY & COMMUNITY
 HEALTH**

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Hidalgo County Family & Community Health and Prairie View Cooperative Extension 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.



**HELPING THE COMMUNITY BE
 PREPARED**

Andréa A. Valdez, Ph.D., M.P.H.

County Administrator, County Extension Agent-Family & Community Health

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Hidalgo County has a relatively high risk for hazards such as hurricanes, heat waves, hail or flooding. To raise social awareness and help the community be prepared for natural disasters, the **Dinner Tonight Emergency Preparedness (DTEP) program** teaches how to make healthy recipes without electricity. A multi-partner and multi-jurisdictional program educated **133 participants** on the importance of emergency preparedness and demonstrated various recipes without electricity from the DTEP cookbook where **77% of participants showed an increase in confidence in preparing healthy meals.** Throughout hurricane season, Dr. Valdez filmed 4 “Weather Chef” videos with **County Judge Richard Cortez** and 2 videos with **McAllen Mayor Javier Villalobos.**



As part of the Dinner Tonight State Team, Dr. Valdez created recipes and content shared on social media reaching over **119,000 people.**

Health programs such as **Cooking Well with Diabetes** and **Cooking Well for Healthy Blood Pressure** continue to be implemented to address chronic disease through diabetes education and teaching participants health recipes, food safety, and cooking techniques. As



STRONG PEOPLE, HEALTHY LIVES

Joanne Ureste-Armijo, M.S.

County Extension Agent, Family & Community Health

County Health Rankings.org reports that in 2023, **33 % of adults in Hidalgo County are physically inactive** and **28% 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 graduates** of this program, **89% of participants increased their strength** and **99% improved their flexibility.** To promote health and provide education on dietary habits, the **Step Up, Scale Down** program reached 63 individuals with **23 graduates.** Through the **Walk Across Texas** program which encourages physical activity through tracking walking mileage, **36 Hidalgo County residents** walked a total of **5,223.39 miles!** The **Master Clothing Volunteer**



(MCV) program provides opportunities for personal growth and home-based business skill development. The MCV program has **34 volunteers** with **3,081 volunteer hours valued at \$87,931.74.** The MCVs implemented **18 workshops with a total of 133 participants** at 2 locations along with **3 community service projects for a total of 336 community service hours.** As part of the **Child Passenger Safety** program, **54 car seats** were inspected with an **economic benefit of \$118,832 for child passenger safety.** The first annual **Heart Strong Conference**, in collaboration with community partners, had **102 participants** with **72% of participants increasing their knowledge of heart health education.**

HELPING COMMUNITIES BE HEALTHY

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 2022-2023. Of those graduates, **1,741** youths were sampled to determine the following food and nutrition-related behavior changes:

- **86%** showed improvement in one or more diet quality practices – ate more fruits and vegetables, drank regular soda and sweetened beverages less often.
- **52%** 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 **\$43 million** in estimated health care cost savings and almost **\$9 million** in food costs.

2023 PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS



Dinner Tonight Emergency Preparedness Multi-Jurisdictional Program (City of Edinburg, Hidalgo County)



Master Clothing Volunteers Community Service at Sekula Library



EFNEP Program Participants



HEALTHY HABITS

TINA MUNOZ, M.S.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION AGENT- FAMILY & COMMUNITY HEALTH



PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Cooperative Extension Program

This year, the Hidalgo County Extension Office welcomed Ms. Munoz as the Family & Community Health agent for the Prairie View Cooperative Extension Program. The Prairie View Cooperative Extension Service programs are focused on providing education to underserved communities. In youth programming, the **Choose Health: Food, Fun and Fitness (CHFFF)** program for 3rd-8th graders targets behaviors shown to reduced unhealthy weight gain and chronic disease by teaching healthy eating and active play. In 3 locations in Hidalgo County, **198 youth** completed the 6 week series. The **STEM Discovery** program included 2 youth classes with **13**



participants. The Cooperative Extension Program adult program include the **Eat Smart, Be Active** curriculum educated **25 low resource adult learners** in 2 locations on physical activity, nutrition, food preparation and healthy lifestyle choices. The 3 week **Cooking Well for Healthy Blood Pressure** series aimed at those that struggle with high blood pressure was implemented at 2 locations for **20 participants.**



The **Families Reading Every Day (FRED)** program which encourages families to read together was implemented at 1 site with **12 participants** completing the month long program.

The **Heat Stress in the Workplace** program was presented at 1 location for **60 individuals** and a **MyPlate presentation** helped **55 participants** at 2 locations learn the benefits of MyPlate and how to keep their plates colorful.



Mental Health First Aid faculty graduates from South Texas College (STC)

29,948

TOTAL FAMILY & COMMUNITY HEALTH AGRILIFE EDUCATIONAL CONTACTS

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

2023 Hidalgo County Agriculture and Natural Resources

Home Horticulture and Small Acreage



2023 Class visiting a field trial.



HIDALGO COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

- 15 people were accepted into the 2023 MG Training program.
- 8 new volunteers graduated and joined the association.
- \$10,000+ raised for educational programs
- Current membership: 86 volunteers; 10 honorary members

2,975 HOURS VOLUNTEERED

VALUED AT \$94,605

RGV SMALL ACREAGE

- 210 participants attended workshops
- 84% (n=164) planned to adopt what they learned
- Since 2016 over 2,230 people have participated in our programs.
- Participants (n=164) estimated an average economic benefit of \$200.



EARTH-KIND WORKSHOP SERIES

- 22 Earth-kind workshops and events
- 621 workshop participants
 - 67% said the information was "Extremely" valuable
 - 79% planned to implement what they learned
- 700 + contacts at outreach events
- 17 gardening articles written for "The Monitor"

Rio Grande Valley Advanced Ranch Management Program



35 Participants successfully completed the 4 Program Series. **Beef Cattle Breeds and Genetic Selection** included a demonstration on what is involved in Artificial Insemination and embryo transferring and held at La Muneca Ranch. **Marketing strategies for South Texas Ranchers** was held at the Texas A&M Higher Education Center. **Wildlife Management Planning** was held at Pena Farms. The Agriculture Law Program covered provisions for land leases, owner liabilities, farm/ranch employment law issues and transferring of property to future generations.

- 87% will make management changes based on what they learned
- Implementation of new wildlife management practices could potentially yield producers \$8/acre which would equate to \$120,000 in revenue
- Economic benefit of \$20/head has an \$80,000 dollar impact across all the number cattle the participants own or manage

2023 Hidalgo County Agriculture and Natural Resources

25th Annual RGV BIA Bull Gain Test and Heifer Development Program



The test started on October 8, 2022, and the bulls and heifers were fed a concentrated feed ration for 112 days. Bulls were measured for average daily gain, scrotal circumference, hip height, and sonogramed by a technician for marbling and ribeye area. We tested 80 bulls and 20 heifers at this event. There were 27 consigning ranchers that participated in the gain test. Participants were able to identify their top performing bulls that will help them market or keep the best animals that they produce. Consignors who had top-performing bulls were given awards and recognized at a beef cattle educational program that was held on May 11, 2023, at the District 12 Extension headquarters in Weslaco, Texas.

• 1,845 bulls and 1,136 heifers have been entered in the 25 years of the Program.

• \$576,000 was the estimated economic impact of the 80 bulls tested in the Gain Test during their next 5 years in the cow herds they will service.

South Texas Agriculture Symposium



There were 42 program participants in attendance. Topics included: Tips for Ranching/Farming Financial Management, Weather-Related Challenges for Horticulture Plants in 2023, Plant Disease Basics: Why is my plant sick?, How Weeds Adapt to Our Control Efforts, Why Plant Phenology Matters in Rangeland Habitat Management, Management to Promote Rangeland Soil Health, Predator Management: Is it worth it?, Considerations When Harvesting Game for Taxidermy and Dealing with Desert Termites and Fall Armyworms in Pastures.

- The economic value placed on the information learned during the Symposium was \$238/participant, or a total value ($\$238 \times 42$) of \$9,996.

Hidalgo, Cameron, Willacy & Starr Crop Production



- Two crop variety trials in Hidalgo County included grain sorghum and cotton.
- 146 producers attended the 29th Annual RGV Cotton & Grain Pre-Plant Conference in Monte Alto.
- The Cotton and Grain Scouting School for Pests and Diseases was held on May 24, 2023, in Weslaco, Texas. There were 55 participants and it was offered both online and in person.
- A Watermelon Field Day was held in conjunction with Bayer Crop Science in Donna, Texas on May 31, 2023. There were 45 producers in attendance.
- Fike Farms Field Day was held on June 6, 2023, with 45 producers at this event.
- During 2023, we provided a total of 20 hours of CEU's to pesticide license holders.



HIDALGO COUNTY

2022-2023 4-H & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



4-H = LEADERSHIP & CITIZENSHIP

ELECTED OFFICIALS AND SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

For the 2022-2023 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! —



804
4-H CLUB MEMBERS



21
4-H CHARTERED CLUBS



100
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 **27** 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 and placing **3rd** out of **33** teams total at State Texas 4-H Roundup.


4-H ACHIEVEMENT NIGHT

With **160** individuals in attendance, the Agent Team recognized members, adult leaders, and volunteers at the end of year banquet. A silent auction held in conjunction raised **\$1,860** to supplement the upcoming 4-H program year.

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

410 North 13th Avenue
Edinburg, Texas 78541
(956) 383-1026

<https://hidalgo.agrilife.org>

 @HidalgoCounty4-H



HIDALGO COUNTY 4-H EXTENSION AGENT TEAM:

Katarina Rodriguez, CEA- 4-H

Dr. Andrea A. Valdez, CEA- FCH

Vidal Saenz, CEA- ANR

Joanne Ureste- Armijo, CEA- FCH

Ashley Gregory, CEA- Hort

2023

BETTER LIVING FOR TEXANS HIDALGO COUNTY

Karen Cantú - BLT Extension Agent

The Better Living for Texans program specializes in educating SNAP-eligible individuals of all ages—from children to older adults—about the value of adopting a healthy lifestyle and engaging in physical exercise. The BLT programs all aim to assist individuals in preparing nutritious meals, increasing their consumption of fruits and vegetables, enhancing physical fitness, reducing shopping costs, developing improved food safety practices, learning how to read nutrition facts labels, and reducing their risk for chronic disease.

A Fresh Start to a Healthier You program aims to educate adults about food safety, general nutrition, how to save money at the grocery store, and eat more fruits and vegetables. **63% of participants Often or Always plan their meals before shopping for groceries and 70% of participants Often or Always compare unit prices before buying food.** The Healthy Carbohydrates program focuses on educating adults on how carbohydrates can be incorporated into a healthy meal plan in preventing and management of chronic disease. **75% of participants Often or Always use the “nutrition facts” on food labels to learn how many carbohydrates are in their food and participants decreased their consumption of regular soda, sports drinks, sweet tea, and sweetened beverages from 60% to 20%.** The Get the Facts program teaches adult participants how to read the nutrition facts panel. **86% and 82% of participants say their health and diet, respectively, are Good, Very Good, and Excellent.** The Be Well, Live Well program is a program curated for older adults that focuses on different aspects regarding nutrition, physical activity, planning meals, and food safety. **86% of participants report their health is Good, Very Good, and Excellent and 59% of participants Never or Rarely/Seldom thaw frozen meat on the kitchen counter.**

The youth program Choose Healthy, focuses on educating youth participants on general nutrition, physical activity, healthy hydration, and eating more fruits and vegetables. **54% of participants increased their physical activity to Often (3-4x) or Quite Often (5-6x) and 87% of participants considered themselves in Good, Very Good, and Excellent health.** The Color Me Healthy for SNAP-Ed program is a early childhood program that teaches young children that nutritious foods and physical activity is fun through music, color, and exploration of the senses. **89% of parents Agree or Strongly Agree that participating in the program has improved their children’s willingness to taste fruits and 100% of parents Agree or Strongly Agree that participating in the program has increased their child’s physical activity.**

The Walk N Talk - Rethink Your Drink youth program had **23 youth graduates with 2,576 miles walked during the 8-week program.** The Walk N Talk - Fruit & Vegetable program had **112 adult graduates with 8,612 miles walked during the 8-week program.**

In FY 22-23, 258 Adults and 118 Youths graduated from the BLT programs!



2023 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 2023. 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:

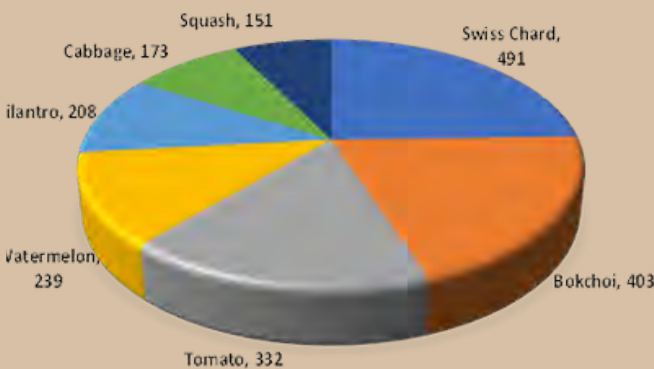
During October 2022 and September 2023, 20 lessons series were delivered for a total of 160 lessons. A total of 233 participants completed the series and 217 graduated. It was reported that 74% of participants had Good or Excellent knowledge of gardening practices after the program. Participants also made significant improvements in their health and their families by having fruits and vegetables at home (84%), serving vegetables at meals (82%), and having fruits as snacks (80%).

LEARN, GROW, EAT AND GO



3,501
 pounds of
 produce were
 harvested in
 13 community
 gardens

It was reported that 76% of participants enjoyed gardening and 61% reported to have gardened at home or in a community garden. Ninety eight percent of 4 and 5 years old children were more willing to taste fruits and vegetables and have increased physical activity. There was an increase in the attitude of elementary school children towards the consumption of fruits and vegetables at home. 73% of children ate more green vegetables and colorful vegetables.



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

2023

SMALL BUSINESS

Get HUB Certified Workshop

In Collaboration with UTRGV-Procurement Technical Assistance-Prairie View hosted a Get HUB certified workshops (3) via Zoom. Attendees learned about the state HUB (Historically Underutilized Business) Certification Program. The HUB Program facilitates state procurement of products and services from minority and women-owned businesses.

49 participants 22 received HUB certifications

BID Academy

In collaboration with the Texas Comptroller's Purchasing division, The B.I.D. Academy teaches the essential business skills and effective strategies for working, managing, and doing business with government agencies. Classes included: Bookkeeping/Accounting, Taxes and Insurance, Business Planning/Marketing, Subcontracting, Nontraditional Financing, Bid Proposals/Graduation (networking event included)

41 Participated

37 Graduated



How to Start a Small Business

In collaboration with a variety of partners this workshop covered important tools and resources a business owner needs to establish a solid foundation during its early formative years. Topics for Discussion Included: - Personal Traits of an Entrepreneur - Marketing Analysis - Legal Structure-Business banking-- Bookkeeping/Accounting Basics - Basics of Business Plan Preparation

263 Total Participants

LAPTOP DISTRIBUTION (YOUTH)



In collaboration with AT&T, Senator Morgan La Mantia, City of Edcouch and Edcouch-Elsa ISD

50 Youth Participants



AT&T



HOMEOWNERSHIP

USDA 502 Home Repair grant & loan program
504 Home Repair program provides loans to very-low-income homeowners to repair, improve or modernize their homes or grants to elderly very-low-income homeowners to remove health and safety hazards.

51 applicants were assisted with grants \$510,000

3 Applicants were assisted with loans \$60,000

HOMEOWNERSHIP ASSISTANCE REIMBURSEMENT Program GLO-HARP

342 Applications

70 Approved projects

\$229,331.54 Disbursements

FINANCIAL LITERACY (HOW TO BUDGET)

237 Total Participants



RINA D. CASTILLO, MPA

Community & Economic Development Agent-Hidalgo County



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