



### Special Topics for Spring 2014

- Fort Bend Centennial Celebration
- 4-H Day at the Capitol
- Backyard Basics
- Ag MicroLoan Program
- Emergency Preparedness Workshop
- Preserving Thy Bounty
- Walk Across Texas - Weight-loss program
- Childcare Providers Mini-Conference
- Small Acreage Horticulture Crops
- Landscape Water Conservation
- Stats & Facts About Fort Bend County
- Snapshot of Upcoming Events
- Contact Information

### April - May, 2014 TOTAL CONTACTS

203 educational sessions  
85,006 attendees  
546 site visits  
671 office visits  
1,019 phone calls  
19,142 emails  
17,008 website contacts  
899 mail-outs  
1,012 volunteers assisted

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is celebrating its 100th anniversary of the Smith-Lever Act which was introduced in the US Congress on May 8, 1914 by Sen. Hoke Smith of Georgia and Rep. A.F. Lever of South Carolina, and was signed into law on July 2, 1914. This expanded vocational agriculture and home demonstration programs in rural America. From those agrarian beginnings, cooperative extension has evolved to serve a wide range of human needs, while continuing to support agriculture, conservation, and a healthy economy in both rural and urban settings.

Today AgriLife Extension Service in Fort Bend welcomes the opportunity to provide clubs, schools, organizations, businesses and individuals a wide variety of research-based educational programs. As you review some of our accomplishments for the 1st quarter of 2014, you will notice a range of topics. We do offer something for everyone!

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Cooperative Extension Program through PVAMU are part of the Texas A&M System. The Texas A&M System, U.S.D.A., and the Fort Bend County Commissioners' Court cooperate as a team to provide support for Extension educational programming in an effort to reach all Fort Bend citizens. Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status.

We invite you to contact us for information on any of the programs listed in this brochure, and we invite you to our Centennial Celebration is set for **June 20 at the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds**. Contact us for more information, and check out Extension.

### 4-H at the Capitol

This fabulous event was designed for all 4-H members to learn more about our state legislative process, see our legislators in session, and to visit with their respective elected officials - district by district. A

\$30.00 per person was collected

that included a long sleeve 4-H t-shirt, catered meal, printed materials, and appreciation tokens for our elected officials. Registration was closed two weeks prior to the event when a whopping 300 registrations were received. Fort Bend had 8 members, 5 adult leaders, and two agents in attendance. The day's event included: Opening Session and Welcome, group photo, visit to either House of Representatives or Senate Chambers for 4-H Recognition, catered lunch, and office visits with our own district legislators. Additionally, we will have four of our statewide leadership/ambassador teams present to demonstrate 4-H projects and activities.



## Backyard Basics!

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Fort Bend County Master Gardeners are pleased to present Backyard Basics, a year-long series of programs and workshops designed to help us all get back to the basics of healthy living through homegrown, home-based production, preparation and preservation of nutritious food. Presenters for the series include Fort Bend Master Gardener specialists, AgriLife Extension Service staff and entrepreneurs experienced in areas such as poultry and food preservation. The workshops often feature demonstrations and visits to the Master Gardener demonstration gardens. The series began on March 22 with **"Vegetable Production"** and will continue through November 8. Twenty vegetable garden enthusiast attended this 4-hour long event to gain valuable insight related to the art of gardening.

On April 26, 2014 another twenty-seven gardeners attended a similar program entitled **"Backyard Fruit & Nut Production"** to learn the popular varieties recommended for Fort Bend, soil conditioning, pest identification and control measures, pollination requirements, the art of pruning and nutritional value of our most popular fruits. In addition, a bit was covered on marketing and value-added commodity ideas. Wow! What a line-up of knowledge shared.

### Upcoming programs include:

☐ July 12 - Eggs & Poultry

☐ September 6 - Grilling

☐ October 11 - Canning

☐ June 28 - Aquaponics

☐ August 16 - Vermicomposting

☐ September 20 - Freezing/Dehydration

☐ November 8 - Jams & Jellies



Visit [fortbend.agrilife.org](http://fortbend.agrilife.org) to download the registration form.



## ***Agriculture Microloan Program***

Our first agriculture microloan investigation program for 2014 was held on March 1 under the direction of the Cooperative Extension Program of PVAMU. Fifteen attendees with interest in starting or renovating a small farm or ranch operation participated. This program was ideally suited for small & family operations, for beginning farmers & ranchers and for socially disadvantaged producers. Microloans can be used for all approved operating expenses as authorized by the USDA Farm Service Agency Operating Loan Program, including but not limited to the initial start-up expenses. Topics and categories that were discussed included: annual expenses such as seed, plants/liners, fertilizer, pesticides, utilities, and property rental; marketing, promotions & distribution expenses; family living expenses; purchase of livestock, equipment and other materials essential to farm operations; farm improvements such as wells, coolers/freezers, barns, greenhouses/hoop-houses; irrigation systems; and delivery vehicles. Approved applicants are eligible to obtain up to \$35,000.

## ***Fort Bend County Emergency Preparedness Workshop***

The Fort Bend Emergency Management Output Plan supports the State of Texas Emergency Management Plan in local cities and surrounding counties. Local emergency management plans provide guidance for the employment of emergency resources under a local incident commander. While local emergency management plans include specific provisions for requesting and employing state resources to aid in managing and resolving situations for which local resources are inadequate, AgriLife Extension excels in providing outreach education to families, communities, businesses, and producers that will help them reduce their risk as they prepare for, mitigate for, and recover from disasters. AgriLife Extension is proud to serve as a partner with Fort Bend and proud to provide the following educational events:

A) The 8th Annual Emergency Preparedness Workshop held in May with 68 participants; B) 2014 Fort Bend County Fair educational exhibit with 60,000 viewers & 1,654 acquiring "After a Storm" publications; C) 2,100 "After a Storm" publications were shared with Fort Bend Office of Emergency Management as part of their programming efforts; and D) EDEN website shared with all Fort Bend County through Facebook, our County Website and through newsletters.



## ***Preserving Thy Bounty!***

Home food preservation is much easier now than back in the olden days when there was no electricity, no refrigeration, and no grocery stores around the corner. Back then people preserved food just to survive another day. It was a necessity not a fad or a form of entertainment or even a hobby. So why would we want to go back to the "olden days"



of preserving our own food as opposed to just buying from a store? Of course, safety in home food preservation is paramount. The goal of "preserving" food is to minimize or inhibit the activity of microorganisms, enzymes, and chemical reactions that can cause spoilage and illness. We can control the growth and activity of undesirable microorganisms, enzymes, and chemicals by using correct temperatures and preservation methods, and eliminating oxygen for storage. During this second quarter of 2014, four classes were held with 24 total in attendance. Topics included: Freezing & Dehydration; Salsas & Relishes; Pickles & Pressure Canning and Canning Tomatoes.

## ***Walk Across Texas!***



**Walk<sup>®</sup>  
Across  
Texas!**

Walking is one of the LEAST EXPENSIVE and EASIEST ways to get fit and reduce your risk for cancer, diabetes, heart disease and stroke? You DO NOT Need an expensive gym membership or overpriced supplements. All it takes is a decent pair of walking shoes and 150 minutes of your time every week for 8 weeks. If you walk or exercise for 30 minutes a day, 5 times a week, for 8 weeks, you'll feel better, lower your stress level and enjoy all of the amazing health benefits of regular physical activity.

This year in 2014, Fort Bend had fifteen teams with eight-members each that walked over 13,500 miles. Comments were: \*Feeling better physically and emotionally; \*I learned how much I really need to walk in order to get in 10,000 steps per day; \*My kids enjoyed the evening walks with the dog; \*My kids enjoyed exercising with me; \*I became more active everyday; and I began to feel better, and more fit. The Net Present Value for health care costs savings for females is estimated to \$2,626,497 and for males, \$318,504.

## ***Childcare Providers Mini-Conference!***

2014 Child Care Provider Conferences was held on March 22 with 51 providers present who earned 4 clock-hours each. It is a known fact that over 60% of children from birth through age six receive some form of child care on a regular basis from persons other than their parents that may not be well educated enough, nor caring & sensitive enough. It is essential for AgriLife Extension to help educate a workforce to provide the high quality child care that children need to develop physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively. This specific event focused on: Blockplay; Bullying; and Gardening for Food and Fun.

Child Care conferences are important to the child care providers of Fort Bend Co. in several ways: 1) to gain valuable updates on a wide variety of pertinent subject matter areas; 2) to gain 'clock-hours' as a means staying current; 3) to network with Extension agents and specialist in the field of parenting; and 4) to network with cohorts in the child care industry.



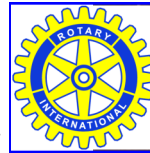
## ***Small Acreage Horticulture Crops!***



Texas AgriLife Extension Service has developed the Small Acreage Horticultural Crops Program to assist in identifying and evaluating diversification strategies for risk mitigation and improved economic sustainability using a variety of small acreage horticultural crops. As crop land in Fort Bend County becomes transferred to residential use and increases in large acreage land prices continue, small acreage operators may find their niche in the region. In response, three specific educational programs were held. The first was an Orchard Production Grafting Clinic with 40 fruit growers present; the second was a webinar on Composting with eight present; and the third was a Fruit Tree Pruning Workshop with 22 growers present. Evaluation results were positive with >80% benefiting.

## Landscape Water Conservation Class

The Urban Water Program under Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension combines many water conservation and quality professionals. During this second quarter in Fort Bend, the Horticulture unit offered five water conservation workshops under the umbrella of Urban X 7 water conservation initiative. The focus was: Lawn and landscape water conservation; Irrigation system design & management; Rainwater harvesting; In-home water conservation; Protecting our urban streams & reservoirs; Water management in urban landscapes; and Resource-Efficient landscapes. The workshops were offered to 2 municipalities, 2 homeowner associations and one garden club with Richmond Rotary participating as a major partner.



## Quick Stats & Facts About Fort Bend

For over 20 years, Fort Bend has been in the top 20 counties in the U.S. for economic excellence and population growth - by design and not by accident. Excellent schools, affordable housing, and extensive recreational facilities have attracted families with impressive demographic profiles. This results in a local employment base that provides companies with a diverse mix of professional, technical, skilled, and unskilled labor with the highest educational levels in the region. To learn more go to <http://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/>.

### A Glimpse of Fort Bend County:

2013 Population: 643,408  
College Educated: 40.40%  
Median Household Income: \$81,528  
Mean Household Income: \$108,994  
Per Capita Income: \$37,152

## Snap-Shot of Upcoming Events:

- June 7 - ABC Childcare Conference
- June 9 - Rockin' Fashion Camp
- June 14 - 4-H County Recordbook Judging
- June 17-19 - Pantry to Plate Cooking School
- June 19 - Grafting Vegetables
- June 24-25 - Teen Chef Cooking Camp
- June 27-29 - 4-H Outdoor Challenge
- June 28 - Aquaponics
- July 1-2 - 4-H Robotics Camp
- July 9 - FBC 4-H Day Camp
- July 12 - Eggs & Poultry
- July 15-16 Stitched Up Camp
- August 12-13 - Food Mgmt. Certification
- August 23—Gymkhana Play Day (Horse Camp)
- September 6 - Grilling
- September 26 - Oct. 5 - FBC Fair
- October 11 - Canning
- October 23—Jams & Marmalades
- November 8 - Jams & Jellies
- August 16 - Vermicomposting
- September 20 - Freezing/Dehydration



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[www.http://fortbend.agrilife.org/](http://www.fortbend.agrilife.org/)

[www.facebook.com/FortBendCountyExtension](https://www.facebook.com/FortBendCountyExtension)

### Our Vision

*To be the premier 21<sup>st</sup> Century outreach & continuing education organization in Texas responding to the needs of the people.*

Educational programs of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status. Persons with disabilities who plan to attend an educational event hosted by AgriLife Extension and who may need auxiliary aids or services are required to contact this office at 281-342-3034 seven days prior to the scheduled event.