



### Special Topics for Fall 2014

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## Centennial Celebration!

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is celebrating its 100th anniversary of the Smith–Lever Act which was introduced in the U.S. 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.

In honor of this great event, AgriLife Extension in Fort Bend County took the opportunity to celebrate the role of our many volunteers, without whom we would not have endured as an outreach education agency for 100 years. Our very special event took place on June 20, 2014 at the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds with over 125 volunteers and guest present in addition to Dr. Doug Steele (Director—Texas A&M AgriLife Extension), Dr. Dale Fritz (District Extension Director—SE District 9) five County Extension Agents, one Cooperative Extension Agent, and seven AgriLife support staff members. A proclamation signed by County Judge Robert Hebert on May 27, 2014 during a special Commissioners' Court event was read and presented. We proudly displayed our centennial banner, enjoyed a delicious barbeque dinner with all the trimmings, and topped it all off with a piece of our official centennial celebration cake. Happy Birthday AgriLife Extension! And, thank you to our dedicated volunteers.



## Cooking Camp for Youth!

Cooking Camps for Youth - Obesity is a major risk factor for many chronic diseases and is increasing among all ages, particularly our youth. The prevalence of obesity among children aged 6 to 11 more than doubled in the past 20 years and tripled for adolescents aged 12 to 19. Poor eating habits and lack of physical fitness seems to be the main cause. As a result, AgriLife Extension implemented two programs in 2014: 1) Pantry-to-Plate, held June 17-19, 2014 for 8-12 years of age with 15 participants; and 2) Teen Chef, held June 24-25 for 13-16 years of age with 10 participants. Each group learned the nutritive values of healthy foods vs. the empty calories of others; food safety; and MyPlate—method of portion control. Results indicated an average increase in knowledge of MyPlate was 67%, 79.5% indicated that they would change eating habits, and 76.7% indicated that the camps were valuable and not just an entertainment venue.



### Sept. - Dec., 2014 TOTAL CONTACTS

206 educational sessions  
165,881 attendees  
572 site visits  
481 office visits  
1,667 phone calls  
12,987 emails  
10,415 website contacts  
1,112 mail-outs  
1,007 volunteers assisted

## 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 home-grown, 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 continued on June 29 with “Aquaponics” (36 participants), July 12 with “Eggs & Poultry” (21 participants), and August 16 with “Vermicomposting” (18 participants). Each educational event was 4 hours long and included plenty of hands-on opportunities.

### Upcoming programs include:

◇ September 6 - Grilling

◇ October 11 - Canning

◇ September 20 - Freezing & Dehydration

◇ November 8 - Jams & Jellies

## Rainwater Harvesting Workshop

A water crisis looms in Texas, driven by population and economic growth, drought, and competition among users for an increasingly scarce supply. The crisis is affecting Texas residents today and it may take decades (if ever) for the supply and demand equation to achieve balance. All of us who live in Texas have a stake in this problem, and there is something everyone can do to conserve an increasingly scarce and yet vital resource. In response to this issue, Fort Bend Extension teamed up in June with Richmond Rotary Club, the City of Richmond, the Historic Richmond Association, and Pepsi-Co to put on a residential water conservation workshop. Attended by 50 local residents, the workshop covered many practical steps that homeowners can take to reduce water use in the landscape and maintain a healthy landscape with plenty of curb appeal. Participants enjoyed hands-on learning opportunities focused on irrigation system components (including converting to a low volume drip system) and assistance in assembling their own take-home 50-gallon rainwater collection barrels. Fort Bend County Master Gardener specialists in irrigation, rainwater harvesting and Earth-Kind landscaping assisted with the program, addressing such topics as landscaping to conserve water, irrigation efficiency, managing water supplies, & harvesting methods.



We hope that everyone will help to spread the word to their neighbors, friends and family on how easy it is to maintain a beautiful home landscape using less water while experiencing the financial savings on their water bills! For more information on home water savings, please visit our state water resources website at <http://texaswater.tamu.edu>.

## 4-H & Youth Development - Club Statistics



4-H is our flag-ship youth development program of AgriLife in Texas and the Coop. Extension System nationwide. It focuses on the needs, concerns and interests of young people. Its primary aim is to help youth gain a positive self-concept, rational social behavior, and knowledge & problem-solving capabilities. Having said that, the 2014 year proved to be a very productive one for 4-H & Youth Development in Fort Bend County. The 4-H program year is a bit different in that it starts on September 1 and ends on August 31.

Below is a rundown of the results of the 2014 4-H year. Many thanks to our adult leaders, Extension agents for both AgriLife and the Cooperative Extension Program of PVAMU, our Fort Bend County support staff, and especially our Fort Bend County 4-H members, without whom none of the following would exist.

\* 4-H Clubs in Fort Bend County - 25

\* 4-H Adult Leaders - 110

\* Curriculum Enrichment Participants - 892

\* 4-H Club Members - 585

\* 4-H Youth Leaders - 94

\* 4-H Special Interest/Short Term - 94,417



## ***Gulf-Coast Classic***

With the increased participation in Youth Livestock shows, livestock education has become vital to 4-H and FFA youth. This program is designed to provide educational sessions on the four major livestock species, Cattle, Swine, Sheep, and Goats in addition to general Broiler and Rabbit sessions. Held August 22, 2014 at the Brazoria County Fairgrounds—both youth and adults alike were educated on industry acceptable livestock husbandry practices, while implementing Quality Counts. Additionally, this program will give youth and adults the necessary tools to successfully complete a livestock project.

This year's event brought in 592 participants (233 youth & 359 adults) that took part in multiple educational sessions throughout the morning of the event, dependent upon their specie of choice and will have the opportunity to participate in an actual Steer, Heifer, Sheep, or Goat show in the afternoon. Several door prizes such as 3 sets of Andis Clippers, and iPad mini, several gift cards plus numerous species relevant prizes. Buckles, banners and trophies will be given as awards for the prospect show hosted by Brazoria, Fort Bend, Galveston, and Harris Counties and was open to all 4-H and FFA members with interest in livestock projects

## ***Multi-County ABC Child Care Conference!***

2014 ABC Child Care Conference was an annual multi-county event that involved both agents and participants from Wharton County, Fort Bend, Brazoria and Matagorda, and in conjunction with Wharton County Community College. This special event was held on June 7, 2014 with 211 providers present who earned a total of 1,477 clock hours needed to maintain certification. 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 and sensitive enough to provide needed care. It is essential for AgriLife Extension to help educate a workforce that will provide high quality care that children need to develop physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively. This specific event focused on targeted providers from 42 child care facilities and day-homes that cared for a total of 3,360 children. Program evaluation results indicated >95% of participants acquired new information from the conference, considered the training to be very relevant to the work they provide, plan to utilize the information gained to improve the service they provide, and consider themselves more qualified than before. Moreover, 55% of the providers rated training "better" or "much better" compared to other trainings they have attended that were not conducted by AgriLife.

## ***Ft. Bend County Junior Master Gardener***



JMG Mission: To grow good kids by igniting a passion for learning, success, and service through a unique gardening education. JMG curriculum has demonstrated improved student learning in reading, science, and math measured through pre-post grade level testing. Each year, over one million students participate in JMG across America. Here in Fort Bend County four educational opportunities were offered. The largest one was the 5-day JMG EarthKind Kids Camp held August 4-8 with 33 youth participating. Topics included prairie habitats, ranch-living, insect pollinators, native plants, edible plants, animal migrations, and arts & crafts for fun. In addition, three other events were held as part of summer-school programming. These were: 1) Southmaster School Entomology Program held on 7/8/14 with 30 youth participating; 2) Scanlon Oaks Elementary Program held on 7/8/14 with 12 youth attending; and 3) Creative Minds Youth Garden Tour here at our Fort Bend AgriLife office with 27 youth participating.



## ***Ft. Bend County Robotics Camp***

Robotics Camp was a 2-day camp held 7-12-14. A total of 36 youth participated each day. The definition of a robot, robot design and building activities were covered. Supplies were simple starting with an array of office supplies. The kids completed a catapult and tested them out using a marshmallow. Afterwards, we incorporated the NXT Lego Mindstorm robotics kits by instructing them to build a robot with a moving part. The younger kids were given a paper box to incorporate into their robots. The older kids were given a motor as well as a paper box to incorporate into their robots. Lunch was sponsored by Domino's Pizza. Fun & Yum!



## Southern Pea Cover Crop Demonstration!

If you venture north of the Extension office, behind the greenhouse, you probably noticed the signs indicating a demonstration plot. This is the plot included 11 Southern pea varieties planted on May 5th. Southern peas are scientifically known as Vigna unguiculata, and most commonly called as cowpeas in the U.S. They are an important high protein vegetable eaten by humans and as fodder by livestock. Most importantly, cowpeas are a high nitrogen-fixing legume. We demonstrated the effects of using cowpeas as a seasonal cover crop. The overall objective was to evaluate the qualities of each variety and then evaluate the amount of nitrogen each variety adds to the soil. Soil samples were taken from each row prior to planting and will be taken again after maturity.



In addition to nitrogen, we evaluated each variety for weed suppression, insect and disease resistance, vigor, pod production, foliage and color. Data was taken once a week in addition to photos. Two out of the eleven varieties have shown the ability to suppress weeds. All have shown resistance to insect damage and most had excellent vigor. However, we definitely saw a remarkable difference in pod production, maturity rates and drying times. After the demonstration is completed, the remaining material will be mowed then disked. After a period of about 6-weeks, we will take soil samples and await the results, then post our findings as compared to pre-plant soil test results.

## Quick Stats & Facts About Fort Bend

Fort Bend strives to be the most family friendly community in Texas by providing a high quality, enriching and safe environment. Each department and elective office provides fast, friendly service to its customers and continually strives to be number one in efficiency and effectiveness. The Commissioners Court fulfills its leadership role by providing necessary resources to the offices and departments to accomplish their duties and goals by establishing budgets, policies and procedures to make the most efficient use of the resources and by actively pursuing quality businesses to locate in Fort Bend County.

### 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:

- September 6 - Grilling
- September 20 - Freezing/Dehydration
- September 26 - Oct. 5 - FBC Fair
- October 11 - Canning
- October 13—4-H Dog Club Info. Meeting
- October 23 - Jams & Marmalades
- October 25 - Home Landscape Workshop
- October 26 - MG Backyard Garden Tours
- October 31 - Master Wellness Volunteer Trng.
- November 8 - Jams & Jellies
- November 8—Fort Bend Co. Open Horse Show
- November 11—Food Manager Cert. Trng.
- December 4— Upper Gulf Coast Citrus Show
- December 6 - FBC Regional Pecan Show
- December 11 - Small Acreage Hort. Tours
- December 11 - Pesticide Re-Cert. Course



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

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

### ***Our AgriLife 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.