TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

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

Making a Difference

In Fort Bend County

Winter 2014

Special Topics for Winter 2014

- Extension's Centennial Celebration
- 4-H Happenings
- Annual Vegetable Conference
- 2014 Backyard Basics Lineup
- Ag Microloan Program
- Pesticide Applicator Training
- CupCake Fun
- Fort Bend Co. Master Gardeners
- Master Naturalists' Scout Program
- BLT—'Get the Facts'
- Richmond Farmers' Market
- Child Care Providers
- Quick Stats & Facts
- Snap-Shot of Upcoming Events
- Contact Information

Jan.—Mar. 2014
TOTAL CONTACTS
173 educational sessions
51,986 attendees
314 site visits
644 office visits
1,794 phone calls
14,501 emails
7,802websites
795 mail-outs
1130 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!

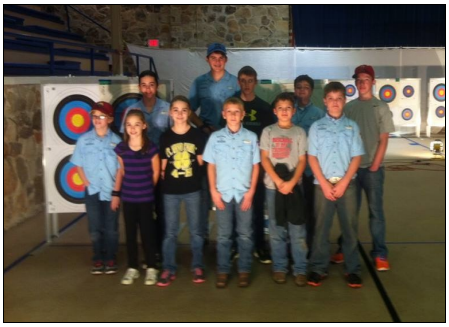
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Cooperative Extension Program through PVAMU are part of the Texas A&M System. The Texas A&M System, U.S.D.A., and the Fort Bend County Commissioners' Court cooperate as a team to provide support for Extension educational programming in an effort to reach all 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 tentatively set for **June 20 at the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds**. Contact us for more information, and check out Extension.

4-H Happenings

Each week we will be highlighting an "Advocate of the Week!" This may be one of your own professors, ag teachers, county agents or anyone who's Texas Proud of Texas Agriculture! This 3rd week of January's spotlight is on Fort Bend County's very own 4-H Agent, Joe Mask! Join me in thanking him for all he does for Texas Agriculture! — with Joe Mask.

Fort Bend County would like to congratulate the participants that competed in the 2014 District 9 4-H Indoor Archery Contest held in January. Aspen, Coral, Mason, Preston, Gibson, Colton, Grace, Micah, Eric, Dennis, Will, Andrew, Logan, Brandon, Zachary, and Jake - placing in the top 5 of their events which were: Junior-Bare Bow - Aspen 5th; Junior-Compound Limited Bow - Coral 1st; Intermediate-Bare Bow - Grace 2nd; Intermediate-Compound Unlimited Bow - Eric 4th; and Senior-Compound Unlimited Bow; Logan 5th place.



29th Annual Vegetable Conf.

This year's program held on February 6, 2014 at the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds was a huge success because of partnerships, diversity, and technology. Participants included 230 paid guests, 15 commercial exhibitors and over 25 volunteers. This program was a 7-county partnership. We broke new ground by adding a program segment from our Food & Consumer Sciences division. Local FCS agent Dianne Gertson gave a real time *Dinner Tonight!* cooking demonstration during the lunch hour of the program. Guests learned how to take their home-grown produce and prepare something tasty and healthy out of it. Moving ahead further in responding to the needs of our diverse audience, we developed break-out sessions where guests could choose the topics that best suited their needs. Even more impressive, as freezing weather limited speakers from traveling to the event, we were able to utilize our web conferencing software and internet capabilities to stream those presenters in real-time. As evaluation results are returned, we'll move forward with our final interpretation, but verbal comments from guests say that they all look forward to coming back next year!

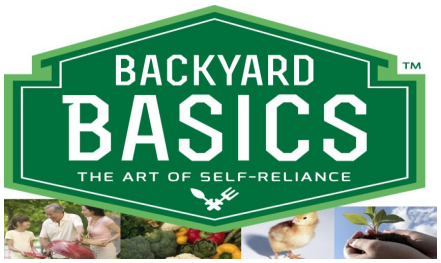
Backyard Basics!

It's Backyard Basics time again. This unique program that originated in Bexar County and now has grown to several other regions teaches sustainability in your own backyard. Topics vary in different parts of the state, but always include the most popular programs identified by you (our clientele) as those that appear to be most interesting. Backyard Basic teach how to grow, process and use your own food produced in your own backyard—safely & efficiently.

Dates and topics are:

- ☖ March 22 - Vegetable Production
- ☖ April 26 - Fruit Production
- ☖ May 10 - Culinary Herbs
- ☖ June 28 - Aquaponics
- ☖ July 12 - Eggs & Poultry
- ☖ August 16 - Vermicomposting
- ☖ September 6 - Grilling
- ☖ September 20 - Freezing/Dehydration
- ☖ October 11 - Canning
- ☖ November 8 - Jams & Jellies

Visit 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.

Pesticide Applicator Trainings ...a value to licensed applicators

As we begin 2014, the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Fort Bend County has kicked off another pesticide Applicator training event on Jan. 14. A total of 35 area individuals received the needed instructions associated with continuing education units for TDA private pesticide and commercial/non-commercial pesticide applicators. Pesticide trainings are important to homeowners, farmers, ranchers, government employees and others needing to stay current and maintain legal status with TDA. The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service coordinated with TDA to present specific trainings based on the user group or groups targeted. Subjects ranged from pest ID/control, drift minimization, sprayer calibration, environmental protection, laws & regulations, IPM, right-of-way pest control and more.

CupCake Fun!

Sixteen very excited young people had a great time learning and snacking on January 3 at a fabulous fun-filled, full-day event entitled CupCake Fun. The goal of this new program was to teach kids how to make, design and decorate cupcakes for fun, for gifts, and for donations year round. The highlights of this day-long event were the creations of several works of art including: Rainbow Cupcakes, Watermelon Cupcakes, Easter Bunny Cupcakes, Scarecrow & Monkey cupcakes, Spider Web Cupcakes, and Winter Fantasy Cupcakes. Wow!

Fort Bend County Master Gardeners

Welcome to the Fort Bend County Master Gardeners' website. Master Gardeners provide volunteer service through the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service for Fort Bend County. To support the goals of AgriLife Extension Service, these volunteers offer their skills and knowledge of horticulture and environmental issues to Fort Bend residents.

The Fort Bend County Master Gardeners promote conservation and sustainable horticultural practices to residents of the county by:

- providing research-based gardening information,
- presenting educational programs for both adults and children,
- communicating gardening information using articles, newsletters, phone and digital media, and
- maintaining demonstration gardens to determine the best plants for the local area.

FBMG programs, demonstration gardens and operations are supported through our annual plant sales.

Coastal Prairie Master Naturalists

On Saturday, February 22, Jim Butcher, CPTMN past-president, led a group of 8 boy scouts from Wolf Pack 940 on an interpretive walk through Seabourne Creek Nature Park. Included in the interpretation were the 4 SCNP Ecosystems, 5 trees, 5 birds and 5 native plants. He also spoke about the history of the area, and they even left speaking a few words of Karankawa. Way to go, Jim!

Better Living for Texans—'Get the Facts' Series

A BLT series entitled 'Get the Facts' was taught at Christa McAuliffe Middle School with 31 mothers present. The attendees learned: 1) the difference between a serving size and a portion; 2) how to estimate common serving sizes using food models; and 3) how the use of proper serving sizes are required to create a healthy, balanced meal. Participants understood the Nutrition Facts label and the consequences of consuming saturated fat and trans fat, and learned sodium and processed foods and the effects of sodium on blood pressure. Evaluation results using a post survey indicated participants plan to use the Nutrition Facts label to determine the amount of food to eat and to choose products lower in fat and sodium. Post survey results revealed that 100% of participants recognize the difference between a serving size and a portion. In addition, post survey results show that 100% of participants understand that 1 in 3 Americans have high blood pressure.

Richmond Farmers' Market

Richmond Farmers Market kicked-off a new season, at a new location! On March 14 the market relocated to the Wharton Co. Jr. College campus (5333 FM 1640 Rd.), across the street from the Richmond Walmart. They will be open on Fridays, through November 21th, between the hours of 2:00 - 6:00 PM. And, on Sundays, starting May 4th through July 27th. Meanwhile, the market is currently accepting applications for new vendors. Please contact the market manager (Liz Stegint), at 281-414-1733 for more info. "LIKE" us on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/richmondfarmersmarket .

Child Care Providers' Education Class

This unique class was held on Saturday, March 22 with 50 participants, 14 volunteers, and 3 Extension staff members present with Agent Dianne Gertson as facilitator. The child care providers were awarded 4 clock hours for their participation. This event was truly multidisciplinary in that our family & consumer science unit and the horticulture unit teamed-up along with their respective volunteers (Texas Ext. Ed. Assoc. members & FBC Mast. Gardeners) to provide top-notch educational opportunities for all. Lectures and demonstrations included the use of building blocks, skits on bullying and container gardening to keep pupils engaged in a positive, productive atmosphere.

What was learned: "Bullying recognition not only through kids, but sometimes parents can display this type of action." "How you can use everyday activities as enrichment towards the kids and oneself. " "How to present gardening to children so they understand what you are trying to teach."

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.fortbendcountytx.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:

- Processing Tomatoes - Thursday, April 17, Fort Bend County Extension Office
- Processing Salsa & Relish - Friday, May 23, Fort Bend County Extension Office
- Composting: For the Small Acreage Producer - April 24, Fort Bend County Extension Office
- Grafting Vegetables: Principles & Practices - June 19, Fort Bend County Extension Office
- Practical Weed Control: Tips & Technology - August 21, Fort Bend County Extension Office
- Food Safety: For the Small Acreage Producer - October 16, Fort Bend County Extension Office
- Business Planning: Planning for Profit - December 11, Fort Bend County Extension Office
- Fruit Production - April 26, Fort Bend County Extension Office
- Culinary Herbs - May 10, Fort Bend County Extension Office
- Upper Gulf Coast Ranch Expo - May 13 in Simonton at Rio Brazos Hunting Club
- Reining & Fundamentals of Horsemanship Clinic - May 17, Fort Bend Co. Fairgrounds Rodeo Arena
- Texas AgriLife Extension Service's Centennial Celebration to honor volunteers - June 20, Fort Bend Fairgrounds
- Aquaponics - June 28, Fort Bend County Extension Office

Vincent J. Mannino,

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www.http://fortbend.agrilife.org/

www.facebook.com/FortBendCountyExtension

Our Vision

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