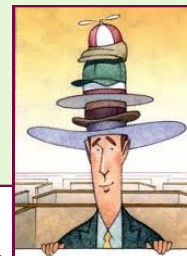




Making a Difference

In Fort Bend County

Fall 2015



Special Topics for Fall 2015

- ◆ Message from the Director
- ◆ National 4-H Week
- ◆ New Employee - Amber Foster
- ◆ A Success! ...FBC Fair & AG'tivity Barn
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Oct.-Dec, 2015 TOTAL CONTACTS

327 educational sessions
79,179 attendees
782 Social Media posts
7,303 Social Media followers
26 Newsletter Editions
23,887 Newsletter contacts
762 Volunteers assisted
3,863 Volunteer hours
745 Edu. Resources Used

Message from the Co. Extension Director

I have been asked numerous times what exactly is the role of an Extension Agent. There is no easy answer to this question. The whole Extension process is dependent upon the Extension Agent who is the critical element in all Extension activities and the backbone of the AgriLife's outreach program. If the Extension Agent is not able to respond to a given situation and function effectively, it does not matter how imaginative AgriLife's approach is or how impressive the supply of inputs and resources for Extension work are. The effectiveness of the Extension Agent can often determine the success or failure of an Extension program.

The Extension Agent has to work with people in a variety of different ways. It is often an intimate relationship and one which demands much tact and resourcefulness. The agent inevitably works with people whose circumstances are different from his/her own. The agent is an educated, trained professional working with farmers, homeowners, businesses, elected/appointed officials, regulatory agencies, and municipalities; and, the list goes on. If I had to design a cap to describe an Extension Agent job in single-word bullets I might say: Teacher, Facilitator, Organizer, Arbitrator, Educator, Administrator, Advocate, Leader, Consultant, Enabler, Catalyst, Communicator, Intermediary, Activist, Friend, Motivator, Listener, Provider, Recorder, Interpreter, and Stimulator. *That is a lot of caps to wear!*

And just a reminder, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Cooperative Extension Program of 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's 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.

Vince J. Mame



National 4-H Week!

National 4-H Week in Fort Bend County started with a proclamation in honor of the National 4-H Week. The proclamation was presented on October 6, 2015 at a regular FBC Commissioner's Court meeting. We are truly very grateful for

the support of our County Commissioners Richard Morrison (Prec. 1), Grady Prestage (Prec. 2), Andy Meyers (Prec. 3), and James Patterson (Prec. 4), and particularly County Judge Robert Hebert. This long and enduring relationship Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service has with our Fort Bend Commissioners' Court is essential for the growth of Fort Bend County's 4-H program and the well-being and quality of life of our young citizens. Many thanks to Sheridan Reid, Hunter Bean, Katie Hyde, Maci Rubesh and Kayle Kaeser who represented Fort Bend 4-H at Commissioners' Court to express our sincere gratitude. *Go 4-H Agents Justin Saenz & Angela Bosier!*

New Employee!

Amber Foster has been hired as the new Fort Bend County Extension Agent – 4-H/Youth Development with the Cooperative Extension Program, effective November 16, 2015. Amber earned a Master of Science degree in Human Science and a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology both from Prairie View A&M University and is currently working on a Master of Education degree in Health also from Prairie View A&M University. She previously worked as an Administrative Assistant for Silverline Montessori School in Pearland, Graduate Research Assistant for the Department of Health Education at Prairie View A&M University, Summer Intern with the Cooperative Extension Program in Grimes County, Mental Health Clinician Intern at the University of Texas Medical Branch/Texas Department of Criminal Justice Pam Lynchner State Jail, Substitute Teacher at Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District, and Graduate Assistant at the Cooperative Agriculture Research Center at Prairie View A&M University. Please join me in welcoming Amber to Fort Bend County, District 9 and the Cooperative Extension Program. *Welcome Amber!*



A Success! ...Fort Bend County Fair & AG'tivity Barn!



The fair's 10-day run came to an end, but not until over 100,000 people attended the Fair. *"The community came out and supported our fair, and it was wonderful to see so many new visitors taking part in what we had to offer,"* boasts 2015 Fort Bend County Fair President & retired AgriLife Extension Administrative Manager, Margaret Kunz.



Most impressive was the variety of events going on daily to entertain the crowd. The livestock entries were all up, and so were the rodeo entries. One of which was *AG'tivity Barn* in which local youth were exposed to various agriculturally-oriented educational activities during the annual Fort Bend County Fair.

Approximately 1,140 students and 125 teachers and chaperones participated in hands on activities during guided school tours such as Crop Production (Corn, Cotton, Soybeans, and Rice), live animal exhibits (Beef Cattle, Chickens, Sheep, Goats, and Swine), Natural Resources (Rainwater Harvesting), Horticultural Production (Earth Kind Gardening), Bees, Fish and much more. Also during the ten day event the *AG'tivity barn* is opened to the general public that comes through the gates. We estimate that sixty percent of the total people that came to the fair actually visited the tent, and in 2015 that equated to 60,000 visitors who came and learned something in the *AG'tivity Barn*. To get

more youth involved in Agriculture during the county fair we also offered a coloring contest to youth in grades K-5. We design an Agricultural theme coloring sheet, and this year we distributed them in all Fort Bend County Libraries as well as all Fort Bend County Tax office locations. All entries are submitted to the Extension office for judging, and in 2015 we had 522 sheets turned in with 341 girls and 181 boys participating in the contest. Winners are selected in each grade level with 1st and 2nd receiving prizes. *Way to go!*

One Day 4-H!

Throughout the months of September and October Fort Bend County 4-H members collected over 300 gift items to be given to the 127 underprivileged children of the Fort Bend Family Promise Center. The Family Promise Center is the only whole-family homeless center in the Houston Area. Toys were organized into age groups: infant, toddler, 5-7 years of age, 8-13 years of age and teen 14 years and older. Once the families arrived at the center they were greeted by our green-shirted 4-H elves who helped them pick out their toys. The children got their picture with Santa and enjoyed milk and cookies while fully embracing our spirit of "Christmas in October." We had 356 youth involved and 100 adult volunteers with a total of 35 hours invested in planning. *Well done FBC 4-H!*





AgSmart.TV

Now you can watch videos from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in the comfort of your home using the Roku Streaming TV & Media Player! If you have a Roku, install the AgSmart.tv channel, open the channel, and then navigate to the AgriLife Extension video block. Video categories include: AgriLife Today News, Animal Science, Dinner Tonight, Horticulture, Meat Science, Rangeland Management, Soil & Crop Sciences, Texas 4-H & Youth, Water, and Wildlife & Fisheries. Since 2012, over 30,000 people have installed the AgSmart.tv channel on their Roku. There are over 340 AgriLife Extension videos and they have been watched over 600,000 times! Don't have a Roku? You can still watch our videos on the InternetTV.tamu.edu website or by going to the AgSmartTV Youtube channel. For more information about AgriLife Extension videos on InternetTV, please visit InternetTV.tamu.edu.

2015 4-H Veterinary Science Certificate Program

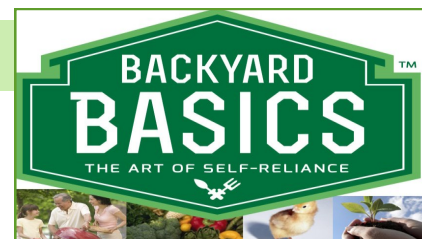
The 4-H Veterinary Science Certificate Program is a 5-year curriculum-based program that includes 100 lessons and 50 activities that give young people interested in veterinary medicine the opportunity to learn and work with professionals in the field. The program is career-oriented and provides on-the-job training for students to prepare them for a career in veterinary medicine. Students who participate in this program work closely with licensed veterinarians or registered veterinary technicians in their veterinary practices for a minimum of 500 clinical skills hours. This hands-on training provides them with an opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to become a veterinary assistant. The program follows an established curriculum that allows students and adults to work together to achieve success. Since the establishment of the Veterinary Science Certificate Program in Fort Bend in 2012 highlights include:

- The creation of nine 4-H clubs that specialize in the vet science project.
- This year we had 45 attendees at the Vet Science Certificate Program Informational meeting.
- We had 11 youth participate in the Veterinary Science Career Day hosted by Texas A&M University.
- Texas 4-H held their first Veterinary Science Camp in 2015 during their Texas 4-H Roundup. Of the 30 youth participating, 10 were from Fort Bend County. During the four day camp, youth completed 33 out of the 78 required Certified Veterinary Assistant Level 1 Skills.



Backyard Basics ...Food Safety

Food safety is an important public health priority. Foodborne illness or food poisoning is a common and costly public health problem. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) estimate that foodborne diseases cause roughly 1 in 6 Americans (or 48 million people) to get sick; 128,000 are hospitalized and 3,000 die. Populations most vulnerable to foodborne disease include pregnant women, the elderly, the very young, and individuals with a chronic disease as well as those with weakened immune systems. On November 14 Family & Consumer Sciences Agent Leticia Hardy, in conjunction with the Agriculture & Natural Resources program area, teamed up to conduct the 2015 Backyard Basic Grilling Conference. During this conference 16 attendees participated in the Outdoor Cooking Food Safety Program. Participants learned about foodborne illness, how to protect their families from foodborne illness, prevention strategies for foodborne illness, and other illnesses related to high temperature cooking. This program was used to equip participants with knowledge on how to use temperature control measures, to practice proper hygiene, to avoid cross contamination, and reduce bacteria growth. Participants completed a post evaluation survey and stated the following: 1) 83.4% understand how to properly grill foods safely outdoors as a result of the class; 2) 75% had a good understanding of how to properly transport foods to outdoor locations; and 3) that 91.6% understand how to properly check food for doneness.



Urban X7 Texas Water Star

Water conservation, low water-use landscaping, rainwater harvesting and similar topics were added to a range of educational programs throughout 2015. Some key programs included:

- Continuation of 3-hour class on "Water Conservation" within the 2015 Master Gardener Short Course;
- Home Water Conservation Workshop held in Sugar Land in October that focused on methods to conserve water in the landscape had 41 Fort Bend County Citizens in attendance;
- Home Water Conservation Workshop held in Missouri City in October that focused on methods to conserve water in the landscape had 22 Fort Bend citizens in attendance; and
- though a great partnership was established by the creation of our local Texas Water Star committee, low registration turnout was the deciding factor to postpone efforts of moving forward with a green industry conference for 2015.



Hatching in the Classroom

Two schools participated in *Hatching in the Classroom*. Seven Lakes Jr. High and Quail Valley Elementary offered this great science-based program to over 650 youth. The project was incorporated into the existing science curriculum using the project to illustrate natural selection, genetic breeding, and the life cycle. Students were able to experience the project by having multiple observations per week for 3 weeks. The incubators were placed in the school science lab, and all grade levels would observe the fertilized eggs through the incubation period. Once they were hatched, chicks were assigned to each grade level to be observed in their hatched state being housed in the brooders. Daily measurements and weighing of the chicks were recorded in the students' Chick Journals. Testimonials included: • Ms. Martinez, 4th grade teacher, stated "I noticed my students were paying attention to detail and being more patient." • Mrs. Velasquez, Kindergarten teacher, stated "My students' interest in science in general has sky-rocketed due to the experiences they had with the program."

Snap-Shot of Upcoming Events:

- Jan. 14 - Fruit Tree Seminar
- Jan. 15 - Master Gardeners' Fruit Tree Sale
- Feb 4 - 34th Annual FBC Vegetable Conference
- Feb. 13 - Kitchen Gardening (Raised Bed Gardening)
- Feb. 21 - Backyard Basics (Spring Food Garden)
- March 14 - Food Preservation (Tomatoes)
- March 15 - Campfire Fun Cooking Camp
- Mar. 19 - Landscape Plants for FB Gardens
- March 26 - Food Preservation (Pickling & Pressure Canning)
- April 11 - Food Preservation (Freezing & Drying)
- April 16 - All About Soils



A Glimpse of Fort Bend County:

The 2015 Population has reached 685,345 of which 40.4% are college educated and earn a mean household income of \$112,893. For over 20 years, Fort Bend has been in the top 20 counties in the U.S. for economic excellence and population growth - and that is by design and not by accident.

Excellent schools, affordable housing, planned communities and extensive recreational facilities have attracted families with impressive demographic profiles. These actions 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: www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/.

Vincent J. Mannino,

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<http://fortbend.agrilife.org/>

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