

Extension Education — Making a Difference in Fort Bend County

2020 Executive Summary



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NOTE! The **COVID-19 pandemic** has seized the opportunity to shift AgriLife Extension's long legacy of traditional educational programming into a whole new dimension. First there was a massive cancellation of in-person planning meetings, educational lectures & seminars, workshops & tours, and shows, exhibits & competitions in March. Then we quickly re-tooled our efforts into any and every form of technology include videos, Facebook, Instagram, blogs, Twitter, website postings, etc. Meetings were held at the beginning by teleconferences then quickly shifted to Skype, Zoom, Teams, WebEx, and other forms of virtual programming. Most all programs from March 15 through the end of 2020 were held virtually. As you review this end-of-year report please keep in mind that our 2020 programs may not represent those of previous years.

Agriculture and Natural Resources

- **Master Volunteers** - These volunteers are local people with an interest in a particular subject. Extension provides extensive training that increases their knowledge and skills in that area. Volunteers use what they have learned to help facilitate Extension educational programming in their communities. Master Volunteers teach youth & adults, train other volunteers, and work on projects in support of Extension. Efforts in Fort Bend include:
 - ◇ Master Gardeners - 31 interns trained using technology in 2020 for a total of 197
 - ◇ Master Gardeners - 20 members of Speakers' Bureau gave 15 presentations reaching 406
 - ◇ MG Volunteer hours totaled 11,657 for a value of \$317,086 (5.6 FTEs)
 - ◇ Master Naturalists - 81 certified & 26 interns trained in 2020 for a total of 152
 - ◇ Master Naturalists - 18 member speakers gave 20 presentations reaching 897
 - ◇ MN Volunteer hours totaled 12,991 for a value of \$354,235 (6.24FTEs)
- **Multi-County Pesticide Education** - Fort Bend, Brazoria, Chambers, Galveston, and Harris Counties have a combined total of 2,659 pesticide applicators licensed (FBC=134) with the Texas Department of Agriculture. Private pesticide applicators are required to acquire 15 CEUs every five years; and, both commercial & non-commercial applicators are required to acquire 5 CEUs every year in order to renew their licenses. A total of 17 hours were offered at 4 different events throughout 2020. Programs offered included:
 - ◇ Fort Bend Regional Vegetable Conf. (2-6-20) - 93 of 240 attending receiving 5 CEUs
 - ◇ 2020 South Texas Agriculture Symposium (4-14-20) - 7 attendees with 2 CEUs offered
 - ◇ SE TX Town and Country CEU Program (11-10-20) - 6 attendees with 5 CEUs offered
 - ◇ SE TX Town and Country CEU Program (12-10-20) - 38 attendees with 5 CEUs offered
- **Sustainable Small Acreage Enterprises** - As crop land in Fort Bend County transfers to residential use and the value in large acreage land prices continues to rise, small acreage operators may find their niche in the region. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, working in coordination with the Texas division of Southern SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research & Extension), has brought forth efforts to assist in identifying and evaluating diversification strategies for risk mitigation and improved economic sustainability using a variety of small acreage crops. Program examples for 2020 included:
 - ◇ Regional Vegetable Conf. - 240 growers gained commercial insight on growing/marketing
 - ◇ Two virtual segments on irrigation efficiencies held that reached 8,800 participants
 - ◇ Soil Testing Campaign—50 samples submitted as part of an effort by CEP & AgriLife
 - ◇ *Earth-Kind Grow Your Own* (series of 6 classes)—a total of 349 attending (29 attending all)
 - ◇ Beekeepers hosted 9 educational meetings with an average of 60 attendees at each



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- ◇ *Gardening on the Gulf Coast* bimonthly virtual presentations reached 7,491 participants
- ◇ FBC Master Gardeners' Speakers Bureau hosted 15 programs reaching 406 attendees
- ◇ FBC Master Gardeners hosted 2 Plant Sales—with 1,061 FBC residents supporting

- **Feral Swine** - Fort Bend Co. feral swine damage is an ongoing and increasing issue among our producers and landowners. On average, the Extension Office conducts at least 15 site visits per month in rural development communities to meet with farmers and ranchers about feral swine damage prevention. The county has approximately 567,000 acres of land with a considerable amount of undeveloped acreage which allows feral hogs free-reign to reproduce at an uncontrollable rate. Programs addressing Feral Swine education included:
 - ◇ Feral Swine Biology 101—40 attended prior to COVID-19 on 2/29/20 (face-to-face)
 - ◇ Feral Swine Profiting from Live Trappings—25 attended virtually on 11/17/20
 - ◇ Hunters 101 Controlling Feral Hogs—27 attended virtually on 12/01/20

Family and Consumer Sciences

Healthy Food Preparation - The goal of HFP is to provide healthy recipes intended to encourage families to eat at home more often and make healthier food choices. Since obesity is a major risk factor for many chronic diseases with Texas ranking 6th among states in childhood obesity (Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Texas), with >60% of children overweight, obese or very obese (NCBI) these obese youth are more likely to have risk factors for cardiovascular disease. Educational programs conducted include the following:

- ◇ Reg. Vegetable Conf. Grilling 101 presentation via video—250 attended a face-to-face event prior to COVID-19
- ◇ What's Cooking recipe YouTube videos during height of COVID reached 2,500+
- ◇ Healthy Cooking Classes held at The Pinnacle Senior Center reached 19 seniors
- ◇ Youth Cooking Camps (4) held via Facebook Live reached 945 youth
- ◇ Dinner Tonight recipes are posted to Facebook. Food demonstration videos topics include – Crockpot Bread, Crushed Tomatoes, Make at Home Seasonings, Make Ahead Ground Beef, Spaghetti Casserole, Mexican Skillet Dinner, Stroganoff Casserole, Red Onion & Almond Green Beans, Curried Red Quinoa & Peach Salad for a total of 860 reached
- ◇ Utilizing Turkey Leftovers (2 video presentations) with a total of 900 contacts
- ◇ Handwashing Video with 150 contacts
- ◇ Path to the Plate commodities utilized for weekly What's Cooking Recipes—10,000/wk

- **Weight Management** - Preventable illnesses make up 80% of the burden of illnesses and 90% of all U.S. healthcare costs. Over the past three decades, childhood obesity rates have tripled with nearly 33% of children being overweight or obese. The numbers are even higher among African Americans and Hispanics where nearly 40% of the children are overweight/obese which may lead to diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer, and asthma. Educational programs conducted in conjunction with CEP's Expanded Food and Nutrition Program, Community Health Choice, and Attack Poverty Organization included:
 - ◇ **Walk Across Texas** - 72 participants (9 teams) took part in this 8-week exercise event by walking a total of 7,153 miles to create a healthy habit of walking everyday. The ultimate result was not only weight loss, but also a delay of the onset of type 2 diabetes.
 - ◇ **The Texercise program** - an 8- to 12-week week fitness and educational program that provided education & opportunity for regular physical activity to reduce the risk and minimize the impact of disease. The 10 seniors gained knowledge of portion size, label reading, food groups, and application of physical activity for healthier lifestyles.
- **Childcare Provider Conferences** - Over 60% of children from birth through age 6 (not yet in kindergarten) receive some form of childcare on a regular basis from persons other than their parents. There are over 100,000 childcare providers caring for more than 760,000 children under the age of 13 in licensed or regulated childcare facilities in the state of Texas. Two events were held in 2020:



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- ◇ Fort Bend Child Care Conference—24 attendees, who provided care for 544 children enrolled in 6 centers. Topics included “Ages & Stages” and “Biting & Toileting” - total of 96 clock hours awarded.
- ◇ An online Child Care Provider Training attracted 218 attendees—total of 436 clock hours awarded.

- **Food Protection Management** - Each year, an estimated 1 in 6 people become ill from the food they eat. Common symptoms of foodborne disease include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramping, fever, and headache. Common pathogens include *Campylobacter*, *Salmonella*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, *E. coli* O157:H7, and *E. coli* non-O157:H7 STEC, causing >\$7 billion in medical expenses, lost productivity, and even death. To meet the need for quality food safety education, a Food Handlers Program, Certified Food Managers’ Program and several food preservation classes were held in 2020:

- ◇ Food Handlers Program (2 hours) - 22 participants learned the basics of food safety.
- ◇ Certified Food Managers Program (2 days) - 100% of the 9 students passed the exam.
- ◇ Online Home Food Preservation (5 classes) - 12 at each learned preservation techniques.

- **Better Living for Texans (BLT) - Be Well Live Well!** - More than 3.7 million individuals receive benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Studies show that individuals who live in poverty are not aware or adhere to current USDA dietary guidelines. During 2020, forty adults completed the BLT’s Be Well, Live Well series— focusing on improving vegetable & fruit intake, meal planning, and adopting selected behaviors that can reduce the risk of foodborne illness. Of those participants, 34 completed the 30-day follow-up survey which allows us to gauge the extent that targeted behaviors were adopted. A *Fresh Start to a Healthier You* series was offered at multiple Fort Bend locations—the Pinnacle Senior Center, UT Physicians, Mamie George Community Center and Fort Bend Gardens.

4-H and Youth Development— 2020 Club Statistics

4-H Clubs in Fort Bend County - 32
4-H Adult Leaders - 70
Ag Awareness - 52,500
Plant Science - 321
County Project Validations - 254

4-H Club Members - 597
Youth Leaders - 85
Biological Sciences - 402
Technology & Engineering - 38
Major Show Entries - 250

- **2020 Agricultural Literacy** - It is essential that AgriLife Extension takes an active role in educating urban/suburban youth about the importance of agriculture in their daily lives. Fort Bend is unique in its demographic makeup with the north & east portions of the county being urban, while the south & west half remain rural. AgriLife Extension developed and implemented educational programming for youth (as well as adults) to address the relevant issue of Ag Literacy. *AG’tivity Barn* involved 5 sponsors and was conducted virtually using video clips of selected subject matter to reach over 1,800 elementary school students and 168 teachers & parents. In addition, 62 youth entered the annual coloring contest.
- **World of Science** - Most elementary schools use textbooks to teach science in the classroom. Hands-on science curricula have become very popular over the last decade. It has been a major focus of the National Science Education Standards. Hands-on learning has been proven to decrease behavioral issues as well as help students begin to develop critical thinking skills. The students not only learn about science, but they also gain reasoning and research skills. Programs related to World of Science included:
 - ◇ **Hatching in the Classroom** – 407 students at Quail Valley Elementary of Fort Bend ISD hatched chicks and studied such topics as breeds, incubation, parts of the eggs, candling, and stages of embryo development.
 - ◇ **Junior Master Gardener** – Our Fort Bend Co. Master Gardeners’ Youth Activity Committee has reached 1,170 contacts through their educational programs and community events. They have contributed 3,905 volunteer hours to the Junior Master Gardeners program.
- **ROBOTICS** - The nation is facing declining proficiencies in science, engineering & technology, as well as workforce shortages in these critical fields. In an attempt to address these deficits,



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the Fort Bend 4-H Robotics Program is focused on 4-H project growth, community outreach, and school enrichment throughout Fort Bend County. Noteworthy activities included:

Robotics Curriculum Enrichment

- ◇ Robotics 1 EV3 Curr. Series—14 students learned to build & program EV3 Lego Bots
- ◇ Hour of Code—5 students viewed a virtual program via Zoom using Flappy Jack video
- ◇ Fort Bend 4-H Stem Week—38 participated and 454 viewed Facebook segments totaling 350 minutes of watch time. Topics included Liquid Layers, Solar Power Oven, Tower of Hanoi, Calming Glitter Jar and Mentos Soda Car.

Club Activities

- ◇ New Fort Bend 4-H Brazos Club formed with 14 members
- ◇ Excel Adventist Academy—Wiggles & Wag grew by 7 members to 16 total focusing on Mechanical Engineering
- ◇ Clubs are set to compete in the 2021 lineup of livestock shows & rodeos

- **4-H Veterinary Science Project/Certification Program** - This project deals with techniques and procedures involved in caring for animals; and it consists of 100 lessons, 50 activities, and 500 clinical hours of on-the-job training in which participants have up to five years to complete. Since the establishment of the Vet. Science Certificate Program in Fort Bend in 2012 we've created ten 4-H clubs. Highlights for 2020 include:

- ◇ Total of three vet science clubs with approximately 60 members in the program area
- ◇ Bi-Monthly hands-on programs were held for members to attend and participate. Workshops included: Injections site—15 participants; animal physiology—12 participants; and Hippology Practice—10 participants.

- **Fashion, Art & Beauty (FAB) 4-H Club** - High quality youth programs help to generate positive outcomes for youth including improved academic performance, social skills, classroom behavior improvement, and self-love as well as improvement in general health. The FAB 4-H Club, with nine members, was created as a safe and productive way to spend their time learning new skills. Our mission is to inspire fashion creativity, explore new interests, and make new friends. Our goals are to share, explore, and expand ideas about the fashion industry, beauty industry, and art industry as it relates to fashion. Events include field trips, fundraisers, workshops, competitions, and more! Activities included a FAB virtual program during the summer in lieu of face-to-face programming which reached 437 participants with 8 adults assisting in creating video clips.

Community Economic Development

- ◇ CARES Act Infoshare to local jurisdictions
- ◇ Hand Sanitizer Delivery to Voting Sites
- ◇ Training segment/hours
- ◇ Binax Test Kits deliveries
- PPE Deliveries to Extension Offices
- Contact Tracing Data
- PPE deliveries to Child Care Providers
- COVID-19 test collections/deliveries

Total Educational Contacts

Educational Sessions Conducted - 1,304
Contact Hours via Ed. Programs - 21,470
Extension Education Club Members - 40
Total Volunteer Hours - 76,771
Direct Contacts (office/site/phone) - 2,092
Newsletter/Email/Mail Contacts - 63,513
Social Media Followers - 206,394

Ed. Contacts - 15,201 adults; 6,269 youth
Master Volunteers - 318 (certified)
Total of Volunteers - 1,167
Volunteer Value - \$1,808,727.12
Indirect Contacts (mass media) - 61,904
Social Media Posts - 7,784
eXtension - Ask the Experts - 875

Contact Information

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Dr. Jeff Hyde, Director, the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.