



Practicing collaboration and innovation to advance the unique interests of urban counties in Texas

TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION

Extension in the City

May 2023
Quarterly Newsletter

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

Practicing collaboration and innovation to advance the unique interests of urban counties in Texas



AGRILIFEEXTENSION.TAMU.EDU

OUR WORK MAKES A DIFFERENCE. IN THE LIVES OF TEXANS AND ON THE ECONOMY.

MISSION STATEMENT:

“Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service works daily to make Texas better by providing innovative solutions at the intersection of agriculture, natural resources, youth, and health, thereby improving the well-being of individuals, families, businesses, and communities through education and service.”

VISION STATEMENT:

“Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service will be the leader in providing science-based information and solutions in agriculture and health to every Texan.”

SHARED VALUES:

“We value People, Programs, and Partnerships.”



Norman Borlaug Youth in Agriculture Program

by Katherine Hamilton, Harris County 4-H/Imagine Science Program Assistant

In March, Harris County 4-H staff Katherine Hamilton and Steven Frederick accompanied 18 Harris County youth as they attended the second phase of the Norman Borlaug Youth in Agriculture Program (NBYP), "The Growing Season" sessions held in Houston. During "The Growing Season", students kicked off the weekend rising to the challenges of agriculture with Dr. Andre Thomas, Associate Professor of the Practice, Texas A&M University, through game-based learning. Students worked together to design games centered around "wicked" problems agriculture faces today, including food insecurity, the impact of methane, water insecurity, and land fragmentation. Participants then had the opportunity to meet with program sponsor and President of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, Dr. Chris Boleman. Dr. Boleman spoke with students on the relevance and importance of the wicked problems they continue to investigate during the course of the program. This session allowed participants to see firsthand that agriculture goes beyond the farmer or rancher, out in the field, as they heard from Ms. Clancy Harrison, Founder, Food Dignity Movement, and Ms. Michelle Van Pelt, Business Development Manager, Dairy MAX, on food insecurity. Harrison and Van Pelt provided students with an experiential learning opportunity to change the perspective and stigma associated with food insecurity. The Growing Cycle session wrapped with Trevor Ragan, founder of The Learner Lab, who motivated and challenged youth to learn through struggles and mistakes, embrace fear, enjoy the challenge, and grow.



The Norman Borlaug Youth in Agriculture Program sows the seeds of collaborative relationships in Texas communities by creating the next generation of leaders and sharing their stories.

LET'S GET MOVING! WITH WALK N TALK

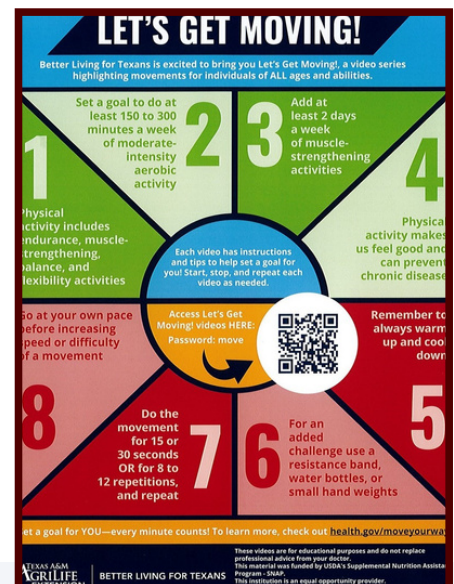
Better Living for Texans (BLT) is a nutrition education program for adults and children that are SNAP participants and SNAP eligible. The BLT program helps people make healthy meals, improve their physical fitness, save money at the grocery store, grow their own foods, and adopt better food safety habits.

Statistics show that 1 out of every 6 Texans struggle with food insecurity and hunger and eat less than the daily recommended allowance of fruits and vegetables. In addition, Texas children and adults are less physically active than recommended. Therefore, BLT helps families make better choices with their limited resources. To do so, they provide research-based nutrition programs that are cost-free and close to home that help participants:

- Increase fruit and vegetable consumption
- Save money at the grocery store
- Increase physical activity in adults and children
- Make healthy menu choices
- Learn about MyPlate

Walk N Talk is one of numerous curricula to choose from and by far the most popular among program participants. During the Walk N Talk 8-week series, friends, family, and others from the community come together to support one another in a fun, simple way. Participants at Boss Ross Senior Center, Gonzaba Medical Group, Northeast Independent School District's Coker Elementary School, San Antonio Independent School District's Price Elementary School, and Walker Ranch Senior Center have been having a great time getting to know one another, learning how to improve their health by making healthy food choices, and moving more using BLT developed physical activity videos with modifications for different physical activity levels.

If you're interested in participating, contact Natalie Ramos, Extension Agent-BLT (natalie.ramos@ag.tamu.edu) or Mary Masterson, Extension Agent-BLT (mary.masterson@ag.tamu.edu) at 210-631-0400. Natalie can be seen in each of the physical activity videos on the left hand side at <https://vimeo.com/showcase/letsgetmovingwithblt>.



TREE MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP: OAK WILT AND MORE

According to Leighton Chachere, Communication Specialist II, oak wilt is one of the most destructive tree diseases in the U.S., killing millions of trees in 76 counties of Central, North and West Texas. Since oak wilt is becoming more and more prevalent in Bexar County, David Rodriguez, County Extension Agent-Horticulture facilitated a tree management workshop entitled "Oak Wilt and More" at the San Antonio Botanical Garden to educate 118 professional arborists, green industry professionals, Master Gardner and Naturalist Volunteers, municipality officials and home gardeners about root collar excavation and tree injection, oak wilt, drought, freeze, and other stressors of trees, common pests of trees in the landscape, keeping trees healthy, tree diversity as it relates to replacement and planning, oak wilt ordinance, and tree license requirements.

Numerous demonstrations were conducted by highly qualified speakers that included Dr. David Appel, Extension Plant Pathologist (Retired)-Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Dr. Andrew Loyd, Bartlett Tree Experts, Molly Keck, Integrated Pest Management Senior Program Specialist, Mark Kroeze, Urban Forester, Texas A&M Forest Service, Mike Holinsky, City of San Antonio Forester, Mark Bird, City of San Antonio Arborist, and Erin Davis, Staff Forester, Texas A&M Forest Service. An oak wilt and tree injection demonstration as well as root collar excavation were conducted to reinforce much of the information shared by the speakers. Participants were able to view each one, ask questions relative to their profession and work, and gain valuable information from experienced educators put into practice.

If you are interested in more information about oak wilt, you can contact David at dhrodriguez@ag.tamu.edu or our Master Gardener Volunteer Hotline at 210-631-0400.

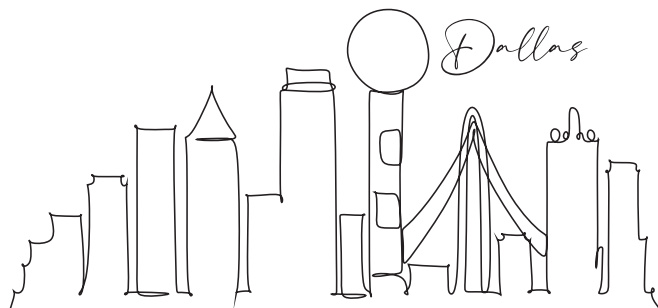


MASTER GARDENERS... THE COMMUNITY IMPACT

Dallas County needs more trees and correctly cares for the ones we already have. In July 2019, NBC Channel 5 reported a 14-degree difference between downtown Dallas and Bowie, located only 90 miles northwest of Dallas.

This notable difference is due to the Urban Heat Island Effect. The latter is because rural areas are covered with plants, grass, trees, and farmland; cities are covered in asphalt, concrete, steel, and brick, primarily dark colored, leading to heat absorption and retention.

High temperatures both day and night in the summer can lead to health problems. Shedding light on the need for more trees and tree care requires many knowledgeable individuals willing to share their knowledge with their community.



Forty-five adult learners, many of whom are retired and will become the next cohort of certified Master Gardeners in 2024

The Master Gardener Program contributes thousands of hours of service and free education every year to the citizens of Dallas, with **41,300** in 2022. Their knowledge and expertise help communities, families, youth, and businesses learn how to garden and landscape with nature and not against it. Master Gardeners set an example of how to adopt various Earth-friendly strategies without giving up production and aesthetics. They love to share the recommendations they learned during the Master Gardener School to enhance the beauty of our neighborhoods, parks, and businesses without compromising the future health of our city's surrounding environments.

Master Gardener School kick-off: After an interview and background check, interns were accepted into the program. They will receive at least 70 hours of education in 14 weeks between January and May. They receive in-person presentations from regional and state Extension agents and specialists (online recordings are available for those who could not attend in person). ***In 2022 Dallas AgriLife Extension Master Gardeners modified the program delivery to provide access to school teachers to be certified as MGs. This new initiative allows six school teachers to apply research-based education and practices in their classrooms.*** Horticultural topics include but are not limited to, Earth-kind principles, trees, ornamentals, food crops, propagation, integrated pest management, plant disease, turf, and conventional and organic best practices. Classes include lectures, collaborative learning activities, team building, tours, hands-on activities, and demonstrations.



Left - Dallas County Master Gardeners Class of 2022 and the MG School Team
The graduation Ceremony was on Saturday April 1, 2023, at the Dallas Community College Performing Arts Theater

Right - Our first cohort of educators, left to right- Dana Booth, Anali Vidana, Lara Guerra, Cynthia Jones, Ilanit Zucker, Bianca Marquez, Stephanie Cantú



DMG! ... *extraordinary volunteers & partners*



Upper photo left to right- Abbe Bolich, Lisa Centala, and Cynthia Jones

Bottom photo left to right- Jackie James and Patricia Gatlin

Ivan Scheier captured the broadest and perhaps most meaningful definition of volunteering: "Doing more than you have to because you want to, in a cause you consider good."

It is their dedication to doing good that has earned Dallas County Master Gardeners Lisa Centala (Class of 2010), Patricia Gatlin (2012), and Jackie James (1993) the Lifetime Achievement Award, an exceptional honor for those who contribute more than 4,000 hours of service in their lifetime. Along with the ultimate honor of presidential recognition, recipients receive a personalized certificate, an official pin, and a congratulatory letter from the President of the United States.

William Clinton said, "Volunteering is an act of heroism on a grand scale. And it matters profoundly. It does more than help people beat the odds. It changes the odds." Lisa, Patricia, and Jackie are the heart of the Master Gardener program. We thank them for their dedication and look forward to the new milestones you will reach with your fellow Master Gardeners.

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

– Helen Keller



Left to right- DCMG Ned Buxton, DCMG Rick Coke, Starbucks Store Manager Shane Litvik, and his team of baristas

A DCMGA (Dallas County Master Gardeners Association) Certificate of Appreciation was awarded to the fantastic Starbucks team at Hillcrest Village for their generous donation of coffee grounds, which are used to create excellent homemade compost that enriches the gardens at Temple Emanu-El, Anne Frank Elementary, and Raincatcher's Garden of Midway Hills. DCMG Director-at-Large Ned Buxton initiated the unique collaboration between this Starbucks location and the Master Gardeners by collaborating with Store Manager Shane Litvik and supplying sturdy 5-gallon buckets where the baristas save the grounds, which average 120 pounds/week.

"By working together, we keep the grounds out of landfills and further the Master Gardener's mission of education and service to the community." What an excellent partnership, indeed!

From the Classroom to the Garden

Did you know Dallas County Master Gardeners support several Dallas area school programs? Congratulations to DCMG Nicole Jones, a first-grade teacher at Lakewood Elementary ISD, who secured a grant to help her students learn more about native plants. We love to see the kiddos planting and learning and can't wait to see how their gardens bloom this spring!



CELEBRATING 30 YEARS AT KIDS AND KOWS AND MORE

Alfred Gonzalez, then El Paso County agriculture agent, developed a teaching model to highlight and promote local agricultural production by bringing it to the city. At that time, El Paso was one of the largest dairy-producing counties and even today, El Paso continues to lead the state with improved pecan production and is the largest Pima cotton-producing area in Texas. This innovative program was designed to bridge the gap between producers and consumers in an interactive way. Program participants visit each learning station and learn steps on how these agricultural products end up on grocery store shelves. Urban and suburban youth have an opportunity to learn about local agriculture through learning stations and presentations led by county agents, Extension volunteers, farmers and ranchers, and commodity leaders.

Throughout the years, the dedicated volunteers, supportive commodity leaders, and great partnerships have made Kids and Kows and More the premier agricultural literacy in Texas. It has such an impact that neighboring states such as New Mexico and Oklahoma host this program in their communities.

To commemorate the 30th anniversary, the El Paso group was honored by receiving a proclamation from Commissioners Court recognizing the importance of educating youth on the importance of agriculture in their everyday lives and the replicability and longevity of the program.

Follow [Kids & Kows and More](#) on Facebook.



Sandra Pierce, program specialist, Jim Rodgers, retired 4H agent and Alfred Gonzalez pose for a selfie at this years event.



Youth from El Paso ISD visit the Moblie Dairy Classroom, a traveling milking parlor, and one of the learning stations at the educational program.

GROWS! WATER CONSERVATION WORKSHOPS

The El Paso Master Gardener Association and the El Paso Water Utilities have teamed up to develop and deliver water conservation workshops for the public. Topics include native plant selection, landscape water conservation, reduction of fertilizer and pesticide use, and landscaping for energy conservation.

These GROWS (Gardening Resources Outreach Workshops and Seminars) educational programs are held at various locations throughout the El Paso Water service area and are free of charge to interested individuals.

Programs are led by certified Extension Master Gardener volunteers as part of their Speakers Bureau committee. In addition to their certification, these volunteers have received additional training in specific horticultural topics from our Extension specialists.

Program goals are to surpass 2022 outreach efforts and to date, we have reached over 130 individuals during the first quarter of the year. Thanks to strategic partnerships, we are able to raise awareness and provide these educational programs in our community. Our Extension Master Gardeners were recently recognized by El Paso Water as Partner of the Year at their annual volunteer and partner dinner in March.

To learn more about our home horticulture program, visit the [El Paso Master Gardener website](#).



Penny Leslie, certified Master Gardener leads a container garden planting demonstration at Whole Foods Market in west El Paso.



It was a packed house at the Bowling Family YMCA in northeast El Paso for our first GROWS workshop of the year.

38TH ANNUAL FORT BEND REGIONAL VEGETABLE CONFERENCE

Fort Bend County is rapidly changing; traditional agriculture and agricultural revenue streams are changing too. Producers are diversifying their operations to maintain profitability. Small acreage landownership is prevalent and homeowners have an interest in home garden and food production. "VegCon" has been an annual event for 38 years. Even through virtual options during Covid, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension provided education to help Texans better their lives with necessary knowledge, skills, and certification units that allow people to participate effectively in sustainable agriculture. Results from previous conferences have shown a consistently positive increase in knowledge.

This year's VegCon covered topics such as Climate Impacts on Crops; Safe Food Production for Onion Crops; Integrated Pest Management for Crop Disease; Building Soils for Better Crops; Pesticide Laws & Regulations Updates; and Aquaponics Vegetable Production. Vendors and partners were present with useful information and opportunities to network with others to help solve problems were woven into the event.

Extension's mission is to serve Texans where they need us most. The people who made this event possible were Boone Holladay, CEA – Hort; Brandy Rader, Volunteer Coordinator; Lorraine Niemeyer, Administrative Assistant; John Few, CEA – Agriculture; Abdul Hakeem, Prairie View A&M Cooperative Extension Program, EA – Ag; and Doug Staff, Technical Assistant; as well as all the Fort Bend County staff members who kept the office up and running. The Fort Bend County Agriculture and Horticulture Advisory Committee (AHAC) and The Fort Bend County Master Gardener Association were also integral in the event's success. County Commissioner Vincent Morales was on hand to start the conference with a warm welcome, and County Commissioner Dexter McCoy greeted participants before their lunch break.



FAMILY AND COMMUNITY HEALTH

February is heart health month and a time we think about love and family. At the February 28th meeting, Fort Bend County Commissioners welcomed the Extension Family and Community Health (FCH) unit to highlight their work.

Introduced first were the newest members of the team in AgriLife's Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). Sujata Jhangiani is an Extension Assistant working with adult audiences teaching nutrition to families with children and Celeste Feast is a Nutrition Education Associate teaching nutrition to youth.

Prairie View A&M Cooperative Extension Program also has EFNEP represented by Krystal Wilcox, Nutrition Extension Associate. Also with Prairie View A&M, and focused on under-served audiences, is Extension Agent Erica Knighton, who provides education on a variety of general FCH topics.

Victoria Zwahr is the FCH Program Coordinator providing administrative support to the unit. Leticia Hardy, is AgriLife's CEA-FCH, who leads a variety of programs including Walk Across Texas.

Walk Across Texas is a project that challenges people to increase physical activity through an ongoing friendly competition. The goal is for teams of up to 8 people to log enough extra physical activity daily to equal 830 miles; roughly the distance from Orange to El Paso. Team members walk, or do other activity, alone or in groups and count their miles during the 8 week challenge. The Fort Bend County Walk Across Texas Challenge started March 13 with 15 teams and 88 participants.

Staff shared an information packet and a "goodie bag" of items that represent FCH programming for court members. The court was gracious to pose for a picture with staff. The presentation was featured in a video report of the meeting posted on YouTube.



Early Childhood Learn, Grow, Eat & Go!

The Harris County AgriLife Extension Better Living for Texans (BLT) Agents Jasmine Carey and Lora Jorgensen, Family and Community Health Agent Dr. Sonja Davis, volunteer Kristina Brown, Horticulture Agent Brandi Keller, three Master Gardeners from the Growing with Plants and Nature Committee, and Brazos County BLT Agent Katie Zender partnered with Wabash Feed and Garden to deliver the Early Childhood Learn, Grow, Eat & Go! (EC-LGEG) curriculum training. This was a train-the-trainer event for early childhood leaders to implement the EC-LGEG youth gardening curriculum. This curriculum introduces youth to gardening concepts to grow vegetables and also includes vegetable tasting experiences.



The partners involved contributed to planning and delivery of a 4-hour training that included presentations, hands-on craft activities, preparing recipes, and container garden activities. Topics that were presented included: an overview of the learn, grow, eat and go sections of the ECLGEG curriculum, cylinder gardening, container bucket drilling, food demonstrations, and parent/teacher resources. Wabash Feed & Garden contributed the space to hold the event, morning coffee, use of demonstration garden beds, seeds, fertilizer samples, and a tour of their facility for the AgriLife team and attendees during the event. Bluebell Creamery donated empty 5-gallon buckets so each participant had three buckets to practice drilling drainage holes in and could take them home to use as container gardens.



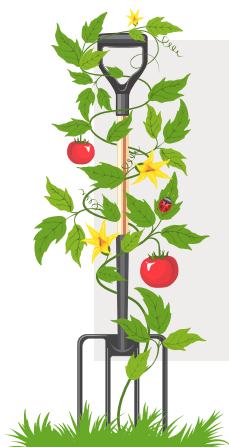
HARRIS COUNTY

2023 Master Gardener Programs

Contributed by Brandi Keller,
Harris County Horticulture Agent



Green Thumb Gardening Series January-March



112

Online participants
through HCC
and HCPL

Topics

Soil & Food Web
Spring Vegetable Gardening
Growing Native Plants



The monthly lecture series runs January through October, presented at no cost to anyone with internet access on a phone or computer. Programs are hosted in collaboration with Harris County Public Library(HCPL) and Houston Community College(HCC).

Cylinder Garden Program Spring 2023 Semester

1295 Students
Registered
from 14 Schools



Educators register students each spring and fall to learn how to grow vegetables from seed to harvest in one semester. In 2022, a total of 6,552 students participated in the program from every precinct in Harris County.

HATCHING IN THE CLASSROOM



Photo: "First Grade Chicks" at Elkins Elementary, Eagle Mountain-Saginaw ISD.

One of the many ways that AgriLife Extension and the 4-H program reach out to youth is through curriculum enrichment opportunities provided to local schools. Kate Marshall, AgriLife Extension 4-H Agent, is the lead for the "Hatching in the Classroom" program. In order to serve a maximum number of schools, she utilizes a "Train the Trainer" approach. Teachers receive curriculum and attend a virtual training on the basics of the 21-day incubation process that it takes for an egg to become a baby chick.

The "Hatching in the Classroom" program in Tarrant County was designed to provide hands-on, experiential learning that would engage students and foster their interest in science and biology. It also helps teach students about the life cycle while tracking the development of chicken embryos during the 21-day incubation period. Overall, the hatching in the classroom project can provide a rich learning experience that engages students in science, fosters their curiosity and empathy, and promotes their personal and social development. Many schools in Tarrant County don't have the equipment (or monies to purchase equipment) to carry out a program like this. This is where AgriLife Extension was able to step in and provide classroom kits with everything teachers would need to conduct this program.

Tarrant County 4-H is currently partnering with 24 schools across the county that will reach approximately 2,000 youth with the hatching program this spring.

4TH ANNUAL STEER ULTRASOUND CARCASS CONTEST

A total of 39 of 46 market show steers participated in the jackpot class at the Tarrant County Junior Livestock Show on March 7, 2023. The steers that participated consisted of various breeds (breed was not used as a measure) including, but not limited to American Crosses, British Crosses, and European Crosses. To participate, steers first had to go through the show check-in process. This included weigh in and going through the classification process to be sure they were in the correct breed class for the live market show. Two images were utilized for the contest. The second image was taken between the 12th and 13th rib to gain an image of the ribeye, which gave us the rib fat thickness as well as the ribeye size (measured in square inches).

The objective of this contest was to gain a better understanding of feeding cattle. The class will allow the exhibitor to gain a better understanding of how their steer will grade on the carcass rail, by looking at carcass traits such as back fat, intramuscular fat, ribeye area, carcass grade and yield grade. It will also allow the exhibitor to understand that different breeds of cattle will grade/feed better than others.

This is largely based on the individual as well as genetics, which will play an important role in the overall quality of the animal. All of which will help the exhibitor calculate and understand the true market value of the calf he or she is feeding.

Of the 39 steers that participated in the contest one steer graded High Choice, nine steers graded Choice, twenty-four steers graded Low Choice, six steers graded High Select. Response to this program over the last 4 years has begun to explode, participants as well as their parents and advisors are beginning to truly understand the value of this information.

The floor price being offered at the sale was \$1.25 per pound, however with looking at the fats markets from the week before, this price was well below the market average at \$1.63. Upon giving the contest results I advised all the participants to utilize their data to sell their steers for freezer meat to help maximize their revenues and pricing no lower than \$1.50 per pound on live weight. 25 of the 39 steers that went through the contest took the advice and got their steers sold of an average of \$1.65 per pound on live weight. Therefore, when you put a dollar figure on this, these 25 exhibitors were able to sell their steers for an average of approximately \$2,115 per head (total live weight of all 25 steers multiplied by \$1.65 per pound) making their premium approximately \$513 per head above the offered floor price of the show.

Congratulations to all the participants of the contest. We would also like to thank the program sponsors: The Meat Board, Rendon Meats, TCAMM Door & Gate, and Mr. Kevin Christian. Thank you to the Tarrant County Junior Livestock Association for the continued support of the contest.



To participate steers first had to go through the show check-in process.



Image of ribeye during contest.

2023 TRAVIS COUNTY SCIENCE OF AGRICULTURE DAY

On February 16th, 2023, Travis County AgriLife Extension Agent, Morgan Newton, hosted a successful Science of Agriculture Day for 3rd and 4th grade students from urban areas in Travis County. The event was held at the Travis County Expo Center. Six different schools from different areas in Travis County attended with a total of 350 students and 57 adults. Students were able to learn about many industries in agriculture including cotton, bees, beef, vegetables, wheat, dairy, chickens and goats! The event would not have been possible without the 52 volunteers and the help of the Kids, Kows and More program, Travis County Farm Bureau, Travis County Master Gardeners, 4-H Capital AmeriCorps members and numerous Travis County Extension Agents. We can't wait for the next one!



BEXAR COUNTY

County Judge Peter Sakai
Commissioner Rebeca Clay-Flores
Commissioner Justin Rodriguez
Commissioner Grant Moody
Commissioner Tommy Calvert



DALLAS COUNTY

County Judge Clay Jenkins
Commissioner Dr. Elba Garcia
Commissioner John Wiley Price
Commissioner
Andrew Sommerman
Commissioner Dr. Theresa Daniel



EL PASO COUNTY

County Judge
Ricardo A. Samaniego
Commissioner Carlos Leon
Commissioner David Stout
Commissioner Iliana Holguin
Commissioner Sergio Coronado



FORT BEND COUNTY

County Judge KP George
Commissioner Vincent Morales, Jr.
Commissioner Grady Prestage
Commissioner Andy Meyers
Commissioner Dexter L. McCoy



HARRIS COUNTY

County Judge Lina Hidalgo
Commissioner Rodney Ellis
Commissioner Adrian Garcia
Commissioner Tom S. Ramsey
Commissioner Lesley Briones



TARRANT COUNTY

County Judge Tim O'Hare
Commissioner Roy C. Brooks
Commissioner Alisa Simmons
Commissioner Gary Fickes
Commissioner Manny Ramirez



TRAVIS COUNTY

County Judge Andy Brown
Commissioner Jeff Travillion
Commissioner Brigid Shea
Commissioner Ann Howard
Commissioner Margaret Gómez



**With the support of the County Judge
and County Commissioners, each Texas
A&M AgriLife Extension County Office
offers the knowledge resources of the
Texas A&M University System to local
citizens for self-improvement, individual
action, and community problem-solving.**

Thank You.