

Goals for FY 2026

Goal One: Resource Stewardship

Prioritize research-based educational programming and interdisciplinary collaboration to promote the responsible stewardship and sustainable practices of Fort Bend County's natural resources for both new and established landowners, and across various sectors and industry partnerships.

Goal Two: Youth Development

Enhance the programming and resources available to schools and families both of which are necessary to broaden concepts in agriculture, natural sciences, human nutrition, and community health for the next generation of Fort Bend County citizens and leaders.

Goal Three: Community Sustainability

Encourage innovation, deliver science-based preventive health programming, and provide the operational support necessary to sustain an environment of readiness, preparedness, opportunity, protection, and resiliency in Fort Bend County cities and communities.

Goal Four: Economic Strength

Enhance the efficiency, profitability, and resiliency of agriculture, natural resources, food systems, and local economies in Fort Bend County, the state of Texas, and around the world.

Goal Five: Healthy Living

Provide innovative service and educational programming to apply, coordinate, and integrate scientific evidence at the intersection of nutrition, human health, and agriculture.

*This Quarter
by the Numbers:*

3,995

Contacts in 1-to-1 meetings

4,852

Educational Program Participants

162

Educational Sessions

9,787

Educational Contact Hours

97 Promotional Events

reaching 42,630 people

6,108

NEWSLETTER CONTACTS

Numbers from AgriLife TAMED reporting system
09/1/25 - 11/31/25 as of December 15, 2025

Our Team

Helping Texans Thrive

Administration

Dr. Amy Ressler, County Extension Director
Cheryl Wasicek, Administrative Manager
Doug Staff, Technical Assistant
Karen Santos, Sr. Administrative Assistant
Robert Perez, Office Assistant

4-H Youth Development

Dr. Willa Williams, County Extension Agent - 4-H Youth Development
Jose Cavazos, PVAMU Extension Agent - 4-H Youth Development
Priscilla Ofori, County Extension Agent - Urban Youth Development
Jarielle Afolabi-Craige, Sr. Office Assistant

Agriculture & Natural Resources/ Horticulture

Jody Taylor, County Extension Agent - Horticulture
Dr. Abdul Hakeem, PVAMU Extension Agent - Agriculture & Natural Resources
Rowdy Sandoval, County Extension Agent - Agriculture & Natural Resources
Brandy Rader, Program Coordinator - Master Gardeners/Master Naturalists
Gabrielle Butler, County Extension Educator - Community and School Gardens
Lorraine Niemeyer, Sr. Administrative Assistant

Family & Community Health

Leticia Hardy, County Extension Agent - Family & Community Health
Celeste Feast, County Extension Agent - Family & Community Health
Erica Knighton, PVAMU Extension Agent - Family & Community Health
Sujata Jhangiani, Extension Assistant - Expanded Food & Nutrition Education
Victoria Zwahr, Program Coordinator - Family & Community Health

Community & Economic Development

Janelle Johnson, PVAMU Extension Agent - Community & Economic Development

Program Spotlight: AG'tivity Barn

Goal Four



Why did the chicken cross the road? To get to the AG'tivity Barn and be a star of the show! Each year during the Fort Bend County Fair, poultry life cycle stages (eggs hatching, baby chicks, and full grown) are on display in the AG'tivity Barn.

Technical Assistant **Doug Staff** plans the incubation process just right so that baby chicks hatch during the Fair. People can literally see agriculture come to life! Around **40,250** visited the **AG'tivity Barn** during school tours, and on nights and weekends. The chicks are always a hit!



AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES/HORTICULTURE

Goals One & Four

The **Fort Bend County Master Gardener Vegetable Garden** team reported reaching their goal for the year. In October, their cumulative total of food delivered to local food banks was **2,181 lbs.** (yes, that's over a TON) of **fresh produce from the gardens** and **581 lbs. of pantry food and produce from Master Gardener donations.** The **total value** of their donations was **\$4,855.43.** Jean Trevino, a leader of the vegetable team shared, "We kept track of our Armenian and Kamari melon harvests this year: 84 Armenian melons so far, more to come, and 32 Kajari melons from that one little volunteer plant! Never underestimate the value of a Volunteer!!" Deb Matherly and Marina Bali co-lead the group along with Jean.



Deb Matherly, Jean Trevino, Marina Bali



Dr. Hakeem shares valuable information about the ins-and-outs of property inheritance.

Dr. Abdul Hakeem, PV AgNR Extension Agent noticed that heirs' property is a significant cause of land loss. To address this concern, he offered a three-part training workshop on "**Understanding Heirs' Property at the Community Level**" at Fondren Seventh-day Adventist Church in Missouri City on Oct 30, Nov 13 and Nov 20 where **51 participants attended.** A local attorney educated participants on the importance of estate planning and provided resources for avoiding heirs' property issues. In other work, Dr. Hakeem featured hydroponics demos at the AG'tvitiy Barn and Pecan Harvest Festival.



Hydroponics grow tower on display with Dr. Hakeem



Volunteers prepare pecan samples for grading and judging

Horticulture Agent **Jody Taylor** conducted the **2025 Pecan Show and Grading Demonstration.** He shared the history and purpose of pecan grading demonstrations and gave instructions to the 12 volunteers who cracked and shelled almost **600 pecans** from **18 growers.** This year's show had **59 entries**, much more than Fort Bend has seen in many years. Winners were announced during the Pecan Harvest Festival in Richmond on Nov 22. Winning pecans advance to regional competition Feb 3-6 in Somerville, then to the Texas Pecan Show in San Marcos Jul 12-15.



Brandy Rader welcomed the new FBCMG Interns. Brandy serves as Program Coordinator for both the FBC Master Gardener Association & Master Naturalists CPC

The **Fort Bend County Master Gardener Association** began the new Intern Training with 22 new recruits on Sep 1. During the 1st Quarter, the FBCMG **Speaker's Bureau** reported **11 events** reaching **405 people.**

The Texas **Master Naturalists Coastal Prairie Chapter** serves Fort Bend, Waller, and Austin Counties. Their fall Intern Training class had 25 new folks. Master Naturalists reported **10 outreach events** with **366 participants** in 1st Quarter.

School & Community Garden Coordinator, **Gabrielle Butler** presented "**Worms at Work**" and "**Up or Down: Veggie Showdown**" exhibits at AG'tvitiy Barn. She shared about her work for Fall 2025 Master Gardener Intern Class on Sep 11 with **20 participants.** She conducted a FBC **Juvenile Leadership Academy** Gardening Session on Sep 8 with **13 youth and 6 adults** and introduced the **Junior Master Gardener Workshop series** on Sep 10 & 18 with **20 adults** at Sugar Mill and Meadow Montessori Schools. A Gardens Committee **Interest Meeting** was held on Oct 13 with **13 adults** and a **Task Force Meeting** on Nov 3 with **7 adults.** Gabrielle presented information to the Sugar Land Exchange on Nov 5 for **64 adults** and worked with the Meyer Elementary School Garden Committee on a garden installation on Nov 19 with **7 adults 1 youth.** She also worked with Armstrong Elem Pre-K class with **50 students** to manage their garden.



Amazing things can start small. This little radish has a lot of potential for Armstrong Elementary.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Goal Two



2025 National 4-H Week Proclamation at the Fort Bend County Commissioner's Court

The Fort Bend County Commissioners Court recognized **National 4-H Week** with a proclamation during their meeting on Oct 9. 4-H members **Saige and Connor Sowa** were introduced by 4-H agent Dr. Willa Williams. They spoke to the court about the positive impact 4-H has had in their lives and how 4-H has helped them be **"Beyond Ready."** Agents Pricilla Ofori and Rowdy Sandoval also attended.



Saige and Connor Sowa are Beyond Ready!



Zoe Pena at the Kendra Scott Gives Back event on Oct 3



Adrian Gonzales at the Fort Bend County Fair



2 Rivers Rabbit and Photography Club meeting on Sep 14



Bugging out at the 4-H Entomology Club meeting on Nov 4



4-H Ambassadors donated balls and games for Constables on Oct 11



4-H Livestock Producers Club made 4-H promo goodie bags to distribute at the Fair on Sep 28



Rose-Rich Rocketry 4-H Club field trip to the Lone Star Flight Museum on Nov 25

4-H Agent, **Dr. Willa Williams** worked with the Rose-Rich Rocketry families (**6 adults and 11 youth**) for a field trip to the **Lone Star Flight Museum** on Nov 25 (a free ticket day) to learn about aviation and aerospace with hands on activities like flight simulators and talking with pilots who actually fly some of the planes in the museum. She also hosted **Model Rocketry Homeschool Labs** with **6 adults and 9 youth**, focused on building a beginner and intermediate rocket, parachute design, straw rockets, and water bottle rockets. The group met every Monday from Oct 13-Nov 17.



Homeschool Labs tested water bottle rockets (perfect during a County burn ban!)



The new kid (Rowdy Sandoval) met the legend (Dwight Callis)

Rowdy Sandoval joined the Fort Bend County Extension staff as the Ag Agent on Sep 1. Out of the gate he went to work on livestock education responsibilities with validation processes (a method of verifying ownership and care of show animals) and managing 4-H entries for major livestock shows. He also participated in new agent onboarding. He learned about AG'tivity Barn/FBC Fair. Rowdy will be working with both youth and adults on animal topics.



Right: Karen and Jarielle help keep all the paperwork in order

Left: Robert, Rowdy, and Jose tag a heifer



33 Clover Kids
353 Club Members
65 Adult Volunteers

Enrollment as of 11/15/25



Priscilla walks youth through the process

Urban Youth Development Agent, **Priscilla Ofori** hosted a **4-H Food Project Information Session** for **7 adults and 13 youth** to learn about the 4-H Food Challenge and 4-H Food Show contests through a presentation and hands-on learning on Nov 25.



Teams must decide what to make from a key ingredient

PV 4-H Agent **Jose Cavazos** ran the **Cowboy Clinic** during the AG'tivity Barn. At Pecan Harvest Festival, he led **fishing & roping activities**. He taught **"School of Fish"** at Wessendorf Middle School for **340 6th graders** in 6 sessions Sep - Nov. He attended NAE4HYDP in Atlanta and joined the Southern Region 4-H Camping Task Force.

FAMILY & COMMUNITY HEALTH

Goals Three & Five



Celeste led line dancing sessions for the AG'tivity Barn school tours

Celeste Feast moved from the Better Living for Texans program (that ended due to cuts in federal funding) to become a CEA-FCH on Sep 1. She offered a 4-lesson series on **Healthy Carbohydrates** at the Irene Stern Community Center with **24 to 32 participants** on Nov 5, 12, 19, and 26. On Oct 14 she presented a **Hydration** lesson to a Foster Grandparents group. Celeste was selected and trained to pilot test a new curricula called **Cooking Well: Texas Meets Mediterranean**. She also led **line dancing** at the AG'tivity Barn.



Celeste with Healthy Texas Program Director Rusty Hohlt

EFNEP Extension Assistant **Sujata Jhangiani** completed the 4-week "**Healthy Bites, Healthy Moves**" (HBHM) series at Fort Bend Hope on Nov 18 with **7 to 10 participants** each week. One family said "Thank you for your time, patience, and above all, for being a woman who helps others regardless of their nationality or language. Thank you for making the effort to help us understand. Most importantly, thank you for helping us build healthy families everyday. Thank you." Other HBHM series Sujata has in progress this quarter are at George Junior High with **13 to 19 people** each week and at the Christine Smith Head Start site with **8 to 13 people** attending weekly.



Sujata and participants made "Easy Cheesy Zucchini" at Fort Bend Hope



FBC-TEEA members plan community service

The Fort Bend County chapter of the **Texas Extension Education Association (TEEA)**, led by **Victoria Zwahr**, met on Sep 16, Oct 21, and Nov 18 to conduct club business, receive training, and plan community service with **8 members** at each meeting. On Nov 18 they hosted a social with alumni and **20 in attendance**.

FCH Agent **Leticia Hardy** presented **Stress Less with Mindfulness, Warning Signs of Dementia, & Holiday Scams** with **8 to 14 residents** of Legacy-Long Meadows; SLWM twice with **8 to 9 people** at TriCity, once with **8 parents** at George Development Center; **Child Care training** for **37 parents/teachers** at Baker-Ripley, & **27 providers** at the Goddard School in Fulshear.

PV EA-FCH **Erica Knighton** taught **Eating Smart, Being Active** at Mamie George Community Center to **15 people** in Sep and **11** in Oct; **A Taste of African Heritage** at New St. Phillip Missionary Baptist Church to **22** in both Sep/Oct; **Choose Health: Food, Fun, and Fitness** at Goodman Elem. to **18** in Oct/Nov, and Townewest Elem to **8** in Oct/Nov. She was at the AG'tivity Barn with plant-based food and the Smoothie Bike, and at the **Pecan Harvest Festival** on Nov 22 serving **over 500 samples** of a flavorful Pecan Meat Tacos.



Erica serves pecan meat taco samples

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal Three

Janelle Johnson hosted a three-part **Teen Financial Literacy Series** on Nov 3, 10, & 17 at three Fort Bend County Libraries providing teens with essential skills to build a strong financial foundation. She participated in the Lake Olympia Middle School **Career Day** on Nov 12 with more than **400 8th graders** where students explored a 3D virtual model of the human heart using the Z-Space computer system. She was at First Colony Middle School on Nov 13 where she spoke to **120 students** about her role as a CED Extension Agent. She collaborated with others from Harris & Waller Counties at the **Voices From the Margin Youth Summit** on Nov 8 highlighting vocational trade programs available through the PVAMU Rural Workforce Academy. Participants engaged in interactive welding and electrical wiring simulations using **Z-Space computers**. The Z-Space programs were also highlighted by Janelle during the AG'tivity Barn at the Fort Bend County Fair on Oct 4th.



Left: Janelle showcased the Z-space technology during the AG'tivity Barn



Janelle and team are ready to teach!

Voices from the Margin Summit

TEAMWORK . . . together we are better and stronger!

The **2025 Pecan Harvest Festival** in Downtown Richmond held on Nov 23 started out as a dreary, rainy day, but the skies cleared up and the the community came out to a lively event with plenty of activities. The **Pecan Education** area and part of the **Kid's Zone** was led by Extension. The annual event that draws thousands of visitors is hosted by the Richmond Rotary Club and supported by Extension to celebrate pecans as an agricultural product and an important part of Fort Bend County's historical development.



Celeste shares nutrition facts about pecans



Priscilla, Erica, & Abdul greet guests and share information



The 4-H Ambassador team sold A&M pecans and told people about 4-H



Gabrielle and her "worms at work"



Jody awards Pecan Show ribbons



FBCMG Youth Activities Committee helps kids make butterfly crafts



Jose led "Backyard Bass" and dummy calf roping for kids.



Welcome to the AG'tivity Barn!



Here's your sign



It's a crowd pleaser



Worms and compost

More about the AG'tivity Barn... Everyone in the Extension office contributed in some way to making the event a success. The staff along with **10 volunteer committee** members planned the event and **90 other volunteers** gave around **350 hours** of time with an in-kind value of **\$12,239.50**. School tours, held on weekday mornings, hosted over **1,250 4th grade** students from **10 area schools**. Tours included sessions at the Mobile Dairy Classroom, a Cowboy Clinic, and "free range" learning in the AG'tivity Barn where students could touch animals, dance, fish, and learn about ag products. Public interface activities on nights and weekends featured **12 different topics** with interactive presentations. An estimated **39,000 visitors** strolled by or through. The pre-event coloring contest had **174 entries** and top winners received cash prizes and ribbons. The AG'tivity Barn just gets better each year!



School Tours



Cowboy Clinic



Mobile Dairy



Good food choices matter



All We Need Farm - Friday night



Coloring Contest winner



Derrick helps out



Kids color clovers and post 'em



This way!



Willa, Jody, and Amy confer

Fort Bend County Extension employees are often out and about supporting community events and activities.



Extension is recognized as a Cornerstone Sponsor of the Fort Bend County Fair for the contributions through the AG'tivity Barn and other support



Janelle, Celeste, Priscilla, Abdul, Gabrielle, and Jody at the groundbreaking for the Black Cowboy Museum in Kendleton with Larry Callies (in red)



Janelle, Celeste, and Jody at the African American Heritage Monument dedication ceremony on Nov 8



Amy at the Fort Bend Leadership Forum - Municipal and County Government Session on Nov 12

Staff Spotlight:



On Oct 17, during the total staff office conference, **Brandy Rader** was recognized as the office GOAT for her above and beyond efforts to navigate the volunteer screening process. As the MG/MN Program Coordinator, Brandy ensures the groups are compliant with all Volunteer Standards. That girl was on fire! (... so Doug brought his fire hat and bubbles.)



At the Nov 21 office conference, **Cheryl Wasicek** was named the office GOAT for her ability to manage crisis situations and deal with difficult people. As the Administrative Manager, Cheryl juggles many demands from many directions. She handles challenges with grit and grace.



Welcome to the team!



L to R: Rowdy Sandoval, Celeste Feast, Amy Ressler, Priscilla Ofori, and Robert Perez pose for a picture in the historical Fort Bend County Courthouse just after a Commissioners Court meeting on Oct 23 when new staff and new positions were introduced. Dr. Amy Ressler also gave an annual report to the court highlighting Fort Bend County's Extension work in FY '25.

Connections and Conversations:



4-H member and young entrepreneur, **Zoe Pena**, came to our Sep 19 office conference to share how on one rainy day she came up with a plan to start a business, save money for her future, give back to others, and make an impact. **Showing Creations** is her t-shirt business with a purpose.



Amy Ressler presented to the Richmond Rotary Club on Oct 14



Pictured left: On Sep 19, **Dr. Willa Williams** trained staff on using Narcan in case of emergency.

Coming up IN THE NEXT QUARTER:

- **Dec 25 & 26 and Jan 1 & 19** - County Holidays
- **Jan 9:** District 9 4-H Invitational Quiz Bowl-Huntsville
- **Jan 17:** Grow Your Own - Garden Planning & Soil Prep - 9am @ Bud O'Sheiles Community Center
- **Feb 7:** Fort Bend County 4-H County Roundup in Rosenberg @ Extension office (volunteers needed)
- **Feb 14** - MG Fruit & Citrus Tree Sale @ Fairgrounds
- **Feb 17:** The 41st Annual Vegetable Conference @ the Fort Bend County Epicenter - *bigger & better than ever!*
- **Feb 28:** TEEA Bingo Fundraiser @ Bud O'Shelies

Closing Thought:

"When there is trust, conflict becomes nothing but the pursuit of truth, an attempt to find the best possible answer." - Patrick Lencioni



For more information:
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