

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."



BEXAR COUNTY

WELCOME TO THE TEAM

Kayla Ayala

Urban Agriculture Educator

Kayla graduated with a Master of Science in Integrated Agricultural Studies from Texas State University. During her studies, she became passionate about educating Texans about agriculture and where their food comes from. She is looking forward to teaching Hatching in the Classroom: Egg to Chick and Learn, Grow, Eat, and Go! with youth.



Michelle Hu

Health and Wellness Educator

Michelle graduated with a Bachelor of Business
Adminsitration in Finance and Accounting from the
University of Texas at San Antonio. Having previously taught
English in Taiwan, she discovered a passion for teaching
social-emotional learning to students. With a deep
commitment to mental health and wellness, Michelle is
currently dedicated to teaching mindfulness through Get
Experience in Mindfulness for youth and Stress Less with
Mindfulness for adults.



BEXAR COUNTY

WELLNESS WEDNESDAYS



According to Merriam-Webster, wellness is the quality or state of being in good health especially as an actively sought goal. Wellness Wednesdays aims to help those actively seeking to reach their wellness goals by providing a wellness activity on the second Wednesday of every month at the Greenies Urban Farm outdoor classroom and kitchen. In 2019, Bexar County began to unveil its vision of indirectly impacting obesity and food insecurity challenges that impact the health and well-being of Bexar County families by shaping their attitudes toward urban agriculture, food, and health. This vision began with the land development of the Greenies Urban Farm located in San Antonio's inner city known as the Eastside and part of the Eastside Promise Zone.





The vision continues with the very first Wellness Wednesday held on March 13th that encouraged families to vary their veggies by trying new varieties each week, incorporating them into their breakfast, lunch, and dinner favorites, and choosing veggies as afternoon snacks rather than sugary or high in fat snack options. Families also learned to keep their food safe by washing and rinsing their produce and refrigerating any leftovers to reduce bacteria growth and food waste.





Bexar County Commissioner Tommy Calvert, Jr. demonstrated a veggie smoothie with the help of our very own Healthy Texas Youth Ambassadors, Claire and Emma Belzung. With the support of Leadership Advisory Board members like Dr. Velica Calvert, Wellness Wednesdays will continue throughout the year by promoting a public health fair, men's health, mental wellness, and so much more.





DALLAS COUNTY

BETTER LIVING FOR TEXANS (BLT) AGENT HELPS ADULTS AND KIDS FIGHT AGAINST CHRONIC DISEASES

In Texas and the United States 7 out of 10 leading causes of death are chronic diseases. Most chronic diseases can be prevented through healthy eating patterns and consistent physical activity.

Reagan Hyde is a BLT agent that hosted Healthy Carbohydrates, a four week program in February and March this year with Valora Medical Group. This program teaches participants how to incorporate carbohydrates in a healthy way, adopt healthy eating patterns, and encourage physical activity amongst all who participate. This program helps fight against and raise awareness when it comes to chronic diseases. With four to six participants in each meeting Hyde was able to converse with the individuals on how many carbohydrates they should be eating in accordance with their specific health goals, how to find the balance with carbohydrates and carbohydrate food choices, fruit and dairy, and added sugars.

Overall, the participants in this program reported that after engaging in this program they became more aware of their food choices and began adapting changes in their eating habits such as changing their portion sizes, eating less sugar, and incorporating fruit and vegetables into their diet.

Outside of the work done with Valora Medical Group, Reagan Hyde held another health-based program with Head Start of Greater Dallas. This program also fights against chronic diseases by implementing healthy habits in early childhood education. Early Childhood Learn Grow Eat GO! program exposes kids to different types of fruit and vegetables and how to grow them. Hyde makes weekly deliveries to two Dallas Head Start locations while the teachers teach the curriculum to the students. This 10 week program has two sessions per week where students not only learn about various fruits and vegetables but also get to learn about various parts of a plant while also building their own container garden. With the help of the faculty of Dallas Head Start, 184 kids ranging from the ages of three and four are being served through this program.



Student art work from the Early Childhood Learn Grow Eat GO! program



Vegetable artwork from the students of Head Start Greater Dallas

DALLAS COUNTY

DEVELOPING AN ECONOMICALLY SMART COMMUNITY

Alexis Horne is our Community and Economic Development agent that hosts workshops throughout Dallas County informing her audiences on different program areas such as: home ownership, workforce development, and small business development. These program areas help build a stronger community throughout the county as well as increase the knowledge and understanding of those that are interested in the many programs she offers. From home buying, credit, financial literacy, USDA loans, career preparedness, to business start-up, the program areas are plentiful and beneficial to implement in our daily lives.

Earlier this year Horne held a single-session workshop for 13 members of the Dallas County 4-H Youth Leadership Organization. The session focused on youth entrepreneurship with the goal of equipping young people with valuable skills, including problem-solving, leadership, financial literacy, and communication. These skills enhance employability while contributing to a skilled workforce. This session in particular, covered topics such as: Understanding the Role of an Entrepreneur, Essential Qualities for Achieving Entrepreneurial Success, Evaluating the Pros and Cons of Entrepreneurship, and Exploring Business Opportunities and Career Paths for Young Entrepreneurs.

Overall, this workshop defined and improved understanding of all those involved in the areas of entrepreneurship, business opportunities, career paths, and business fundamentals. Dallas County is proud of the work CED Agent Alexis Horne is doing in the community.



4-H Youth Leadership Organization students participating in the CED Workshop held by Alexis Horne

HEART HEALTH MONTH WITH CARTER BLOOD CARE

February was Heart Health Month and to honor that Agent Marvin Young partnered with Carter Blood Care to host a Blood Drive at our North Dallas office. Blood supplies across Texas and America are at a critically low level and this was a way for us to do our part in an effort to help save lives. The event lasted for five hours with an audience of mainly adults and some of the North Dallas Extension agents donating their blood. All who participated were able to receive community service hours (if you were a student) and a quarter zip pullover for their donation.

Communications Coordinator Lexi Wesley spoke with the mobile site supervisor Jakyra Jones of Carter Blood Care who shared insight on the event and how to donate blood in the future. "We had a great turn out. We had six sign-ups but doubled that by the end of the day," Jones said. Although blood donations were administered in a mobile unit Jones shared, they also "have fixed sites across the North Texas area."

For those that are looking to donate blood in the future mobile site supervisor Jakyra Jones explained how to do that. "You can find the different blood drives online by visiting carterbloodcare.org," she said. "The process takes between 30 and 45 minutes. Some blood drives are busier than other and some you can just walk in and we take you right on."

When it comes to donating blood some may be intimidated but Jones explained why donors shouldn't be afraid. "We have all types of people that donate from the ages of 16 and up," she stated. "Just give it a try. Everybody is afraid sometimes but if you come in and give, you'll realize it's not as scary as it may seem.



Agent Matt Orwat donating blood



Carter Blood Drive Mobile Unit



Agents Elver and Katerina after donating blood

EL PASO COUNTY

PESTICIDE APPLICATOR TRAINING 2024

On February 1st, El Paso County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service hosted the annual Pesticide Applicator Training at El Paso County's Ascarate Park Pavilion. The program agenda consisted of topics relevant to El Paso County growers/producers as well as parks and recreation personnel. Because of our proximity to the State of New Mexico, and the fact that many Texas growers farm in New Mexico as well, we partnered up with our colleagues at New Mexico State University and New Mexico Department of Agriculture to offer CEUs in New Mexico as well. The agenda consisted of University Level presenters and University Level presentations. The event was attended by 66 people and provided 5 CEUs for 32 Texas Pesticide Applicator License holders and 10 New Mexico Pesticide Applicator License holders.

WORKER PROTECTION STANDARD TRAININGS

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service – El Paso County has provided safety training for Farmworkers/Handlers for many years now. The EPA requires all Handlers/Workers to attend this annual training. This very important and informative training requires the ability to speak Spanish as most farmworkers in the El Paso area are fluent in only Spanish. El Paso County Agriculture consists mainly in the Upper Valley and the Lower Valley, with the City of El Paso centered between both. We felt it was necessary to host these training courses at local schools for a few reasons; Schools tend to have good meeting spaces and tend to be the hub of the more rural communities, most workers are familiar with the schools because their children attend them, and finally, school districts are long standing partners with Extension. In 2023, we added an additional partner, the school migrant program to include resource updates and opportunities for farm workers and their families. In February 2024, AgriLife Extension- El Paso County reached 157 farm workers at three different locations while bringing together eight school district migrant program staff to serve as onsite resource personnel for these workers and their families.



Migrant Program presenting at WPS



Spanish EPA worker training



Pesticide handlers CEU conference

EL PASO COUNTY

HEAD-HEART-HANDS-HEALTH IS BECOMING THE EL PASO WAY

El Paso 4-H agents have led teacher training for three ISDs this quarter and have established school based 4-H clubs across 13 school campuses partnering with the Texas ACE Afterschool Programs. Campuses have implemented Hatching in the Classroom and Learn, Go, Eat, and Go! gardening programs. As a result, these 4-H campuses have been recognized by superintendents, administration, and community stakeholders for bringing a positive impact to their students. Together, through 4-H, we are sowing the seeds of curiosity, nurturing the growth of young minds, and cultivating a brighter future for generations to come.

Our local community clubs, Desert Valley 4-H and Sunset 4-H, engage 4-H members in project areas that include livestock showing, leadership, photography, archery, and various shooting contests. With hard work and great effort El Paso youth have placed 2nd in San Antonio for Lewis Class VI - JR Shootout, 2nd place in San Antonio Photography Intermediate Age in the category of Plants and Wildlife, and 7th place in Austin JR Market Barrow. Together, we celebrate their achievements and passion for 4-H.



Alarcon Elemenatry 4-H'ers observing chicks



Photo Courtsey of Olivia Hernandez, Desert Valley 4-H member

NEW AGENT ALERT!



Ashley Cisneros, BLT agent, is an El Paso native and UTEP graduate with a degree in Biological Sciences and a Minor in Women and Gendered Studies. She has worked at a local ISDs and has volunteered alongside different organizations that brought a community of women together to support each other in their nutrition and physical activity goals. Ashley's love of science and biochemistry drove her to want to start a career in nutrition. Ashley hopes to educate as much of the community as possible because it's never too late or too early to make a difference in your life!

FORT BEND COUNTY









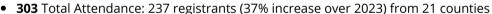
WE LOVE TO TELL PEOPLE ABOUT OUR WORK!

The Fort Bend County Extension office hosted an **Open House** on Monday, Jan 29, with a come and go format between 10:30 am (right after a Master Naturalist meeting) and 6:30 pm (just before a 4-H Parent Advisory Board meeting). During the day, **61 guests** signed in, including Fort Bend County Judge KP George and County Treasurer Bill Rickert. Extension program areas had informational exhibits with staff on hand to answer questions. Volunteers from Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, and a 4-H member shared about their work. Visitors could play "Extension Lingo Bingo" for a chance to win a door prize.

Vegetable Conference

The 39th Annual Vegetable Conference covered topics of Bees & Honey Production, Marketing Produce, Climate/Drought & Irrigation, Introduction to Permaculture, and Mushroom Gardening, along with CEU sessions for licensed pesticide applicators. Every Fort Bend County Extension area was represented with informational booths along with other vendors. *Pictured right are support staff members Brandy, Lorraine, and Karen welcoming folks with a smile.*

On Feb. 8, at the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds, the Vegetable Conference provided **educational topics for small scale vegetable producers. CEUs** for pesticide applicator licensing were offered in Laws & Regulations and Integrated Pest Management. State Representative **Stan Kitzman** (*pictured below right*) gave opening comments, and Fort Bend **County Judge KP George** visited during a break. Every Fort Bend County Extension staff member helped in some way, and many volunteers made the event successful.



• **32** exhibitors; **10** special guests; **8** speakers

• 415 CEUs granted for 85 people (who could earn up to 5 CEUs each)

Pictured below is a panoramic view of the







County Commissioner, Precinct 2, **Grady Prestage** (pictured left) met with the Extension staff during the monthly total staff office conference on Feb 16. He shared words of wisdom and encouragement. As a strong supporter of Extension work, he challenged the staff to look toward the future of our rapidly changing county for innovative ways to adapt. "Although Extension work may look different in a county our size, the work you do continues to be vitally important," he said.



FORT BEND COUNTY

Youth Outreach

Fort Bend staff members Willa Williams, Jose Cavazos, and Janelle Johnson along with two Coastal Prairie (Ft Bend) Master Naturalists assisted Harris County Horticulture Agent Brandi Keller with 45-minute "Bat Chat" presentations about the benefits and habitats of bats. Over 1,000 youth at Hubnek Elem participated in the educational sessions. Brandi, who made the connection through the Houston Bat Team with Texas Parks and Wildlife, said "It was crazy, but also fun. Because.... Bats are batastic!"



Pictured above, Extension Staff and Master naturalists presented "Bat Chat" at Hubnek Elementary on Jan. 23



Pictured left, Nisa Khan talks about the benefits and wonders of chocolate

FCH Agent Nisa Khan hosted a "**Fueled by Chocolate**" workshop along with FCH Agent Leticia Hardy for GED students on Feb. 14. The **12** students were introduced to chocolate as a fruit, shown new culinary skills, and got to taste chocolates from around the world. They learned about chemistry of the body's reaction to eating a miracle berry, the anatomy of tongue, and the connection of sugar to the brain.

Prairie View A&M University Extension

PVAMU - Extension Agent - Community & Economic Development, Janelle Johnson, is building a program from the ground up as the first of its kind in Fort Bend. Janelle earned her **certification as a Freddie Mac CreditSmart Facilitator** on Jan. 11 after completing 10 weeks of training and passing a test. She and Erica Knighton presented the **Junior Achievement Academy** at Brazos Bend Elementary School teaching Financial Literacy, Entrepreneurship, and Work Readiness skills during the 5-week program with **22 students**. She is the local point of contact for the Houston Furniture Bank - Stafford Location, managing **300 vouchers** for the **Furniture Assistance Program** that provides essential furniture to low-income families and individuals impacted by natural disasters, domestic violence, poverty, and mental health challenges. The program integrates financial literacy and homeownership education as vital components of essential skills for sustainable living.



Pictured above PVAMU Extension Agents Janelle Johnson and Erica Knighton teach "Junior Academy



Pictured left, Erica Knighton watching as a participant at a Health Fair celebrates success on the smoothie bike

PVAMU-FCH Agent Erica Knighton showcased Extension work at Austin H.S. and New St. Philip's Baptist Church Health Fairs and Mission Bend-Glen Elem. Science Night with co-workers. She taught "*Taste of African Heritage*," a 6-lesson series to 40 participants total at the Sugar Land Branch Library, Mamie George Community Center, and Rosenberg Civic Center. She demonstrated recipes with a team at the **Women in Ag Conference** on the PVAMU campus on Feb. 23 featuring Bitter Melon Salsa and Malabar with Smoked Turkey.

PVAMU-Agriculture Agent, Abdul Hakeem, hosted an **Agribusiness Planning** workshop on Jan. 24 covering *An Overview of Agricultural Appraisal* and *Guidelines to Qualify for Ag Evaluations using 'Wildlife Management' and 'Beekeeping'* with **40** people attending. A **Forest Workshop** was held on Feb. 13 with **14** people, promoting urban forestry where more than **300** trees were distributed free of cost. And, a **Pollinator Gardens Workshop** was held on Feb. 20 as a joint workshop with Fort Bend County Master Gardeners. The purpose of this workshop was to educate general public about the importance of pollinators and which plants should be planted to provide pollen and nectar. There were 51 registered, **9** attended in person, and **19** people attended online.



Pictured above: guest speaker, Nathan Hermond, from Prairie View A&M Extension, presenting "Imagine Life Without Pollinators!"

HARRIS COUNTY

4-H & Youth Development



Harris County 4-H Agent Katherine Hamilton and Program Assistant JoceLynn Lewis delivered a STEM facilitation training to Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Houston staff that will be implementing Imagine Science programs this spring. Imagine Science is a collaboration between 4-H, Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Houston, Girls Inc., and YMCA of Greater Houston providing informal STEM learning opportunities to bridge the STEM gap. The two-hour training was delivered to 29 staff serving 197 youth during the spring semester. The training covered the importance of positive STEM learning experiences and how it can impact youth outcomes, and practice STEM facilitation sessions. Boys and Girls Club staff reported they felt better equipped to deliver positive STEM learning experiences after attending the training.









HARRIS COUNTY

Highlighting Partnerships

by Harris County EFNEP Agent Khadija Ghaffar



EXPANDED FOOD AND NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM

Gulfton/Sharpstown is one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the Houston area. However, due to years of disinvestment, this largely immigrant and refugee neighborhood has become an area of concentrated poverty. In 2016, "Connect Community Social Services Organization" was created to bring organizations and local residents together to collaborate, align their efforts, and mobilize a broader network of assets to meet needs and strengthen the overall community.

Harris County EFNEP was approached by a representative who attended our program at another location. They loved our services and the topics being covered. In February/March 2024, we started working at their location to offer our "Healthy Bites, Healthy Moves" 8-Lesson series for adults. Twenty-five females from limited income families attended our program. Volunteers from Connect Community provided translation services to these participants of West African descent.

The participants enjoyed our program activities and shared their appreciation. They informed us that due to the cultural differences in foods, they were unaware of food groups and which food belonged to each. The programs have helped them gain skills to manage their resources better and provide healthier meals to their families.

Partnerships like these help make our work in the community more impactful!



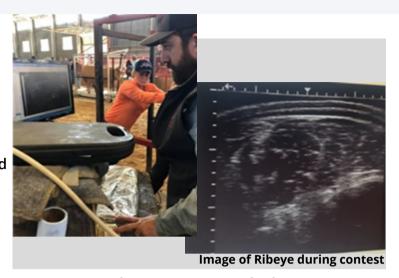
TARRANT COUNTY

5TH ANNUAL STEER ULTRASOUND CARCASS CONTEST

A total of 21 of 35 market show steers participated in the jackpot class at the Tarrant County Junior Livestock Show on February 24, 2024. 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. Two images were utilized for the contest. The first image was taken over the 9-10-11 ribs to measure the percentage of intramuscular fat, which in turn was used to determine Quality Grade. 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 primary goal of this contest was to enhance participants' knowledge of cattle feeding. The course provided exhibitors with valuable insights into how their steers would be graded on the carcass rail, examining factors such as back fat, intramuscular fat, ribeye area, carcass grade, and yield grade. Additionally, it aimed to impart an understanding that various cattle breeds exhibit differences in grading and feeding performance. This discrepancy is influenced by both individual characteristics and genetics, both of which play pivotal roles in determining the overall quality of the animal. Ultimately, this knowledge empowers exhibitors to accurately calculate and comprehend the true market value of the calves they are raising.

Of the 21 steers that participated in the contest 16 steers graded Choice and 5 graded High Select. The interesting fact about these 5 steers that graded High Select, is they would be Choice in about 60 days if they were to remain on feed for that amount of time.



Response to this program over the last 5 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 set for the show stood at \$1.25 per pound. However, upon analyzing the previous week's fat markets, it became evident that this rate was significantly lower than the market average of \$1.84. In presenting the contest results, Jackyln Jones-Doyle, County Extension Agent, ANR, recommended all participants leverage their data to sell their steers as freezer meat, aiming for a minimum price of \$1.80 per pound on live weight. Out of the 21 steers in the contest, 13 heeded this advice and successfully sold their steers at an average rate of \$2.04 per pound on live weight. In monetary terms, these 13 exhibitors managed to secure an average of approximately \$2,321.55 per head (calculated as the average weight {1137 pounds} of the 13 steers multiplied by \$2.04 per pound), yielding a premium of approximately \$872.18 per head above the initially offered floor price of the show.

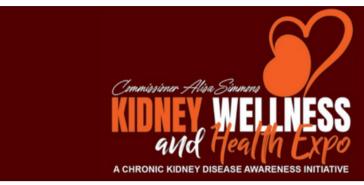
Congratulations to all the participants of the contest. We would also like to thank the program sponsors: The Meat Board, Rendon Meats, as well as 2 anonymous donors.

Thank you to the Tarrant County Junior Livestock Association for their continued support of the contest.

TARRANT COUNTY

COMMISSIONER ALISA SIMMONS KIDNEY WELLNESS AND HEALTH EXPO





There is no kidding around when it comes to kidney health. Commissioner Alisa Simmons and her team hosted the inaugural Kidney Wellness and Health Expo in Precinct 2 on Saturday, March 9, 2024, and we were honored to be a part of this successful community event. Born from Commissioner Simmons' personal experience with chronic kidney disease (CKD), the expo featured on-site kidney screenings, panel discussions led by healthcare specialists, and cooking demonstrations showcasing kidney friendly recipes (hosted by Christa DeStefano, County Extension Agent, FCH).

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) is a medical condition that occurs when the kidneys are damaged and can no longer filter blood effectively causing excess fluid and waste to remain in the body.

Did you know...

- 1 in 3 Americans are at risk for kidney disease?
- 37 million people have chronic kidney disease (CKD)?
- 660,000 people live with kidney failure?
- 100,000 people are waiting for a kidney transplant?
- Kidney diseases are the 9th leading causes of death in the U.S.?

CKD risk factors include: diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, family history of CKD or kidney failure, smoking/tobacco use and age over 60. Unfortunately, people with CKD may not experience any symptoms, therefore blood and urine tests are the only way to confirm a CKD diagnosis.

For more information about kidney health and CKD screenings, contact your healthcare provider. Visit The National Kidney Foundation's website (www.kidney.org) for excellent kidney-friendly nutritional resources and tips for staying fit before and after a kidney disease diagnosis.

References: National Kidney Foundation
Photos Courtesy of The Office of Commissioner Alisa Simmons



TRAVIS COUNTY

4-H CAPITAL AT TRAVIS COUNTY YOUTH SHOW

The 2024 Travis County Youth Show was held on Friday, January 12th and it was a huge success for 4-H Capital. Many of our students received ribbons for their goats, Including one first place ribbon! Laylah R. and her goat Biscuit from Ortega Elementary were awarded first place in the first class bracket. Our students gave their all and, in total, 13 students placed high enough to go to auction. At auction our goats earned almost \$17,000 which will be used for next year's goat program. We are so proud of all the work our whole 4-H Capital team has put into this program!

















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



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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.