



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

TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION

Extension in the City

October 2024 Quarterly Newsletter

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extension
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD,
AND NATURAL RESOURCES

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



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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.”

DALLAS COUNTY: EMPOWERING TEENS THROUGH TEENS AS TEACHERS PROGRAM

In underserved areas of Dallas County, youth face significant gaps in resources and opportunities, particularly in leadership development, employment, and educational enrichment. These disparities stem from systemic public policy and economic decisions rooted in discrimination, impacting communities of color and those experiencing poverty.

The Teens as Teachers (TaT) program addresses these challenges by providing teens with paid positions that promote career readiness, leadership, and civic engagement. In partnership with the Boys & Girls Club, participants prepare and deliver a targeted curriculum tailored to the local needs of youth aged 8-12.

In September, we launched a monthly newsletter informing teens and their families about upcoming events and program requirements. We celebrated the program's inaugural season with an End of Celebration Picnic featuring yard games, food, and activities for teens and their families.

Throughout September, our focus shifted to establishing a STEM curriculum and training for teen teachers. We selected the "Food for Thought" STEM kit from National 4-H and Imagine Science, with training scheduled for October 5 at the RB1 building in Garland.

In preparation for National 4-H Week, a resolution was submitted and approved, allowing four teen teachers to represent our program at the October 1 Commissioners Court hearing. Additionally, we secured over \$13,000 in scholarships for a group of teens to attend the National 4-H Summit Ignite in Washington, DC, in March 2025.

The program engaged 17 teen teachers (ages 14-18) and their families, creating a positive, pro-social environment. These teens were compensated for their summer work, which gave them insight into economic principles and allowed them to contribute to their family expenses. Together, we are building a brighter future for our youth!

***Total Participants Reached Over the Last Three Months in Six-Hour Series Programming:
Teen Teachers Hired & Trained: 17
Youth Served: 345 participants (ages 5-17)***



Teen Teachers during their STEM training, celebration Picnic, and offering their testimonials at the Dallas County Commissioners Court during National 4-H Week.

Better Late than Never

Estate Planning Workshop for Agriculture Producers

According to Forbes magazine, there are three reasons why people avoid estate planning. They either think they are too busy; it is too complicated and/or expensive, and because they are superstitious and do not want to jinx themselves. Most people know it is something they should do, but rarely actually get around to doing it.

As difficult as it may seem, it is quite necessary if we want to avoid causing our loved one's additional stress at an exceedingly tough time in their lives.

To help agriculture producers create a farm and ranch estate and financial plan Atascosa and Bexar Counties hosted an estate planning workshop on August 27, 2024, at the Witte Museum to help them ensure the success and well-being of their family's next generation. In addition, the workshop strived to help them identify stressors unique to farming and ranching as well as learn strategies to help manage them.

Speakers included Helen Holdsworth, Chief of Engagement – Witte Museum, Tiffany Dowell Lashmet, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Professor and Extension Specialist for Agriculture Law, Dr. Miquela Smith, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Program Specialist - Health, and Laura Martinez, Senior Relationship Manager – Capital Farm Credit.



Light at the End of the Tunnel

Greenies Urban Farm Groundbreaking Ceremony

The Greenies Urban Farm was originally 10-acres of undeveloped land acquired by Bexar County in San Antonio's inner city known as the Eastside and part of the Eastside Promise Zone. The Eastside Promise Zone is a 22-sq. mile geographic area designated by former President Barack Obama in 2014. It was one of the first five nationally recognized Promise Zones which lasts for 10 years and is designed to provide the 39,502 Eastside residents with "ladders of opportunity".

The Eastside of San Antonio was once predominately African American and now is 66% Hispanic and 26% African American with a median household income of \$28,034, which is 76% less than the national average. The Greenies Urban Farm is a \$15.9 million dollar construction project that will provide a gathering place for learning and giving by 2025.

On September 12, 2024, Bexar County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, and Nunnelly General Contractor hosted a groundbreaking ceremony to introduce the nearby community to what will be the future home of the local Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. The 13,000+ square foot office building designed by Debra J. Dockery, Architect P.C. will become an education and research hub for generations to come.



GROWING OPPORTUNITIES WITH AEROPONICS IN DALLAS

Urban areas like Dallas face significant challenges in meeting the demands of their populations through traditional agriculture. Space constraints, soil quality issues, and high real estate costs often make large-scale farming unfeasible (Khatri et al., 2024). Aeroponics offers a promising solution, allowing plants to grow without soil or traditional growing mediums.

In an effort to promote small-space gardening, the North Dallas Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office has launched a new project featuring six aeroponic tower gardens located in the foyer of the North Dallas Tax Office building. This month, a training session was held for three North Dallas Master Gardeners interested in volunteering to support the upkeep and educational aspects of the aeroponic towers.

During the training, Master Gardeners learned how to build an aeroponic tower, germinate seeds using rockwool, check water pH levels, and harvest produce from the towers. Their involvement will enhance the project by increasing the number of individuals available to maintain the gardens and educate the public on efficient growing techniques in limited spaces.

The participation of Master Gardeners not only bolsters the maintenance of the aeroponic towers but also expands our reach within the community. By equipping volunteers with knowledge and skills, we aim to foster greater public interest in urban gardening and sustainability.

Through this initiative, we hope to inspire Dallas residents to embrace innovative growing methods, transforming small spaces into productive gardens. Together, we can cultivate a greener future for our urban communities!



Aeroponic growing system on display throughout the North Dallas office



RB1 HOSTS SUCCESSFUL WINE MAKING CLASS

The Vineyard team at RB1 recently hosted a four-part beginner wine making class designed to introduce participants to the wine production process. Led by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Viticulture expert Michael Cook, the first session provided a comprehensive overview, followed by hands-on instruction from the Master Gardener RB1 Vineyard team.

The class welcomed 10 adult participants from both the Master Gardener community and the public. Throughout the course, attendees enjoyed a tour of the vineyard, learning about its history and the fundamentals of winemaking. Under the guidance of the viticulture expert and the RB1 wine team, participants embarked on their winemaking journey by creating two batches of wine—one red and one white—using grapes harvested from the RB1 vineyard.

At the conclusion of the class, participants not only acquired essential knowledge about the winemaking process but also had the opportunity to take home some of the wine they produced. This engaging and informative series empowered attendees with the skills needed to make their own wine in the future.

The success of this class underscores the commitment of the Vineyard team to educate and inspire the community about viticulture and the art of winemaking. We look forward to future classes that continue to foster a love for this craft!

LEARN, GROW, EAT & GO! AT EL PASO ELEMENTARIES

The mission of Better Living for Texans is to “provide research and evidence-based nutrition, health and wellness knowledge to empower individuals, families, and communities to make positive changes for healthier lives.” During the months of August and September, the Learn, Grow, Eat, and Go! (LGEG) program was implemented at Ysleta Independent School District at Alicia Chacon Elementary School with the collaboration of Better Living for Texans and the City of El Paso Parks and Recreation Center’s afterschool youth program.

The LGEG program is a 10-week program that promotes academic achievement by combining gardening, nutrition, and physical activity for elementary aged youth. LGEG promotes the focus areas of Better Living for Texans: to increase fruit and vegetable intake, adopting healthier eating patterns and increasing physical activity. At Alicia Chacon Elementary, students were able to do fun educational activities by learning about the importance of plants and how plants are essential for our environment. They accomplished this by doing hands-on activities such as growing their own vegetables in containers and identifying the needs of plants and enjoyed learning how to create their own garden at home.



Additionally, these young participants ended the program with completing activities that promote healthy lifestyle choices by becoming artists to create their own meals based on MyPlate, a tool used to symbolize the five different fruit groups created by the United Stated Department of Agriculture (USDA) and researching the benefits of different vegetables. Every week students demonstrated their excitement by being prepared to learn about gardening, nutrition, and being physically active!



TURF MANAGEMENT AND CARE PROGRAM

Here in the southwest desert our parks and green areas are an essential area where the community can enjoy leisurely activities during the summer/wintertime. Having well-kept and maintained turf/grass area(s) is necessary for these activities and other events to happen. Our Fall turf management and care program had 56 attendees from different green industry areas including city parks and recreation departments, county parks and recreation departments, local university system maintenance grounds crew members, and private landscaping industry professionals. The workshop was composed of three 1-hour sessions that discussed the following subjects: turf care during the fall and winter months taught by Dr. Bernd Leinauer, turf diseases and how to prevent diseases in turf systems taught by Dr. Philip Lujan, and a discussion of the importance of soil/composting for water retention and water conservation in desert turf systems taught by the local Horticulture Extension Agent. El Paso AgriLife Extension partnered and collaborated with specialist(s) from the New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service. We will continue to provide programming for local green industry departments and communities to extend our footprint of research-based information throughout the county of El Paso.



SUMMERTIME AND KIDS!

Summertime is a great time for Youth Development Education opportunities! Several youth day camps and workshops were hosted in Fort Bend County this summer! **Over 35 events were reported reaching more than 400 youth.** Collectively, agents and volunteers taught kids important life skills though nutrition, clothing, gardening, science, leadership, and just plain fun!



Big Five 4-H Project Workshop held on August 24



Homeschool Labs started in August covering Rocketry and STEM



EFNEP's "Healthy Heroes" taught at community camps during the summer



"Youth Fashion Week" Camp taught kids about sewing, clothing, and personal care July 16-18



Prairie View's "Nutrition Block Party" Camp held June 10 - 13



"Sweet Treats" Camp on July 30 covered nutrition and entrepreneurship



4-H Open House & Sign-up night on August 15

One highlight of the summer youth activities is the **EarthKind Kids Camp** hosted by the **Youth Activities Committee (YAC)** of the Fort Bend County Master Gardeners Association. The camp offers an immersive 4-day experience for 3rd - 5th grade youth. This year **25 kids** were treated to a full itinerary of activities led by YAC members July 22 - 25. *Pictured below* are the dedicated volunteers who make it happen, and a few "in-action" snapshots from the week.



Youth Activities Committee



Donna Blackburn serves as YAC chairman



The YAC ladies blossom!



EarthKind Kids Camp participants engage in a variety of hand-on activities and interesting learning sessions

ADULT LEARNING IS FUN TOO!

Fort Bend County Master Gardener Association (FBCMGA) grows each year through the intern training class. Interns go through 12 weeks of training with 2 classes per week for a total of 72 hours. Then, they provide at least 50 hours of volunteer service within the following 8 months before becoming officially certified. To maintain certification, they must continue learning and giving back with 12 hours of continuing education and 24 volunteer hours per year.



Twenty-four interns started their Master Gardener training in 2023, celebrated their completion in June of 2024, and got to work right away.



A new class of Master Gardener interns began on August 20, 2024 with 22 new trainees.

On **World Senior Citizen Day**, August 21, FCH Agent Nisa Khan and Master Gardener Arti Bansal partnered with the County Judge's Office to lead a two-hour workshop for 25 participants introducing plant propagation at a local community center.

The 2024 **Grow Your Own** series of in-person trainings wrapped up the program year on August 3, with the final session "Cool Season Vegetables and Herbs" taught by Lauren Martin. A total of 49 attended in person, and 59 viewed a recording online afterward.

PVAMU Extension Agent for Agriculture, Dr. Abdul Hakeem held a **Rainwater Harvesting and Water Management workshop** on July 30 with 38 producers.



Nisa Khan shares plant propagation instruction with participants



Participants of "Grow Your Own" tour the demonstration gardens after class



Dr. Abdul Hakeem explains the process of Rainwater Harvesting to participants at a workshop on July 30.



Professional development is vital to success. Fort Bend County and Harris County staff gathered on August 23 at the Fort Bend County Emergency Management Training Room for an **Extension Urban Programming Workshop**. The meeting covered strategies for teamwork and addressed specific challenges of Extension education in urban areas. *Pictured left* is Urban Program Director, David Wright, sharing his vision of the future with the group.

Texas Watershed Steward Workshop: Water Quality Training on the Greens Bayou

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension (Harris County) Horticulture Agent Stephanie Gray hosted an educational program on July 25, 2024, at the Harris County Flood Control District Michael Talbott Service Center. This Texas Watershed Steward (TWS) program was initiated to provide science-based, watershed education to help citizens identify and take action to address local water quality impairments. Texas Watershed Stewards learn about the nature and function of watersheds, potential impairments, and strategies for watershed protection. This program offered 4 Continuing Education Credits to soil and water management for certified crop advisers, professional engineers, certified teachers, professional geoscientists, certified floodplain managers, Master Gardeners, American Institute of Certified Planners, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality occupational license holders, and three general CEUs were offered for Texas Department of Agriculture private pesticide applicator license holders.

This program had many partners, including the Harris County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office, Extension Specialists, the Harris County Flood Control District, Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board, and the Houston- Galveston Area Council. This educational program was free and open to the public. Funding was provided by the federal Clean water Act Nonpoint Source Grant from the US Environmental Protection Agency.



60 people attended this program. Survey results were completed by all 60 attendees and show how successful this event was. 50% of attendees answered that they would be willing to pay \$50-\$59 dollars for this program. All attendees answered that they feel what they learned will provide them with the ability to be a better steward for their watershed. 67% of participants plan to adopt best management practices learned from this program. There was a 27% increase in knowledge of watershed hydrology and watershed policy based on pre and post test results. The Texas Watershed Steward Workshop was a successful event and highlighted the importance of public water conservation education.

CYFAR in Harris County

Zach Giblin, Urban Youth Development Agent with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension in Harris County, recently led a Grant Orientation Meeting on September 9th, 2024, marking the kickoff of the "Science Wings Through 4-H" initiative. This meeting brought together key stakeholders, including teachers, principals, and PTA members from Harmony School of Science, Harmony School of Excellence, and Harmony Science Academy-Cypress. The focus was on discussing the Children Youth and Families at Risk (CYFAR) Grant Timeline and next steps, ensuring all partners are aligned and prepared for the upcoming activities.

The Harmony School of Excellence is set to pilot the program, beginning in January 2025. This pilot will serve as a model for other schools, showcasing the potential impact of integrating 4-H's science-based projects into the curriculum. The meeting underscored the importance of collaboration and detailed planning, with contributions from David Wright, Principal Investigator, and Dr. Manuel Pina, External Evaluator, who provided valuable insights into the program's evaluation and success metrics.



NIFA visits Texas EFNEP Sites

EFNEP(Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program) leadership from the Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) visits one to three states a year to see programming firsthand, to understand programming in the broader Extension and university context, learn of local needs and concerns, discuss national program priorities, and provide technical assistance. Texas was selected because of the diversity of programming and the commitment to excellence and leadership that have been shown by Texas A&M University and Prairie View A&M University EFNEP staff.

NIFA representatives noted: "EFNEP programming through Texas A&M University is exceptional. The commitment and support of Extension leadership are essential and contribute greatly to the success of the program, as well. The cooperation and collaboration across institutions, with partners, and among program staff and participants was truly impressive. NIFA staff appreciated the presentation, "EFNEP Highlights from Across the State", given by EFNEP staff from both institutions. It was evident that EFNEP agents throughout Texas are organized and have a deep dedication to service. They are proud of their educators and the work they do."

EFNEP Program observations were conducted at the Hamilton Middle School- HISD (youth program) and Horn Elementary School-Alief ISD (adult program) in Harris County. EFNEP Agent, Khadija and EFNEP state coordinator, Chelsea Bishop Smith accompanied the NIFA reps during these visits. NIFA representatives noted: "Programming in action was appropriate. Both classes were highly interactive, with participants fully engaged."



WOMEN IN AG CONFERENCE

Jacklyn Jones-Doyle, County Extension Agent - ANR, hosted the second annual Women in Ag Conference on September 10 and 11, 2024, at the historic Fort Worth Stockyards, bringing together 40 women from various regions across Texas for two days of learning, collaboration, and empowerment. The event was specifically designed to support and elevate women working within the agricultural sector, offering them valuable tools to enhance their professional and personal lives.



Participants were provided with opportunities to strengthen critical skills such as problem-solving, record-keeping, and decision-making—essential components for success in agriculture. The agenda featured a wide array of topics aimed at addressing the unique challenges faced by women in this field, focusing on bolstering financial security, improving access to management resources, and addressing key areas like risk management and legal liabilities.

Additionally, the conference emphasized practical guidance on navigating complex issues related to family estate planning, an important aspect of sustaining long-term agricultural operations. The diverse and tailored subjects ensured that attendees left with actionable knowledge and strategies to apply to their businesses and personal lives, making the conference a significant resource for women in agriculture seeking growth and resilience in an ever-evolving industry.

Stephanie Bradley Fryer, the keynote speaker, is a 5th-generation Texas landowner with deep roots in agriculture. Raised on a cotton, wheat, and commercial cattle operation, she has dedicated her life and career to supporting those in the agricultural industry. Stephanie continues to manage her family's land near Stamford, Texas, and partners with her husband, Gates,

who is the 4th generation on his family's ranch in Southwest Oklahoma, where they raise cattle and wheat. In addition to her work in agriculture, Stephanie is also an attorney who has represented farmers, ranchers, landowners, and rural Americans in a variety of legal matters. Her expertise spans estate planning, oil and gas issues, real estate transactions, and other agricultural-related concerns throughout Texas.

Joining us as speakers were a diverse group of experts, including Arianna Chavez from AgriVision Farm Management; John Tyson from the USDA Farm Service Agency; Brandt Self and Paige Todd from Clifton Larson Allen LLP; Dr. Blake Bennett from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension; Donna Patrick from Sunset Hill Tree Farm; and Tiffany Dowell Lashmet, also with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. Each speaker brought valuable insights and expertise from their respective fields, contributing to a well-rounded and informative conference.

This event would not have been possible without the unwavering support of the Women in Ag planning committee. We extend our sincere thanks to Martha Garrett, Julie Bryant, Stacy Fox, Diane Johnson, Jason Johnson, Sherry Flow, and Gabby Harris for their commitment and hard work in bringing the conference to life.

We are also incredibly grateful to our sponsors - AgTrust, Heritage Land Bank, Russell Feed Store, Reata Restaurant, Capital Farm Credit, and Merck Animal Health—whose generous contributions helped make this event a reality.



Events like this thrive on the backing of dedicated individuals and organizations, and we're excited to announce that planning for next year's conference will begin soon. Stay tuned for more details!

2024 TRAVIS COUNTY SCIENCE OF AGRICULTURE DAY OCTOBER 2, 2024

Every year Travis County hosts a Science of Agriculture Day created to help the urban population understand how food gets to their table. This event is aimed at teaching the urban youth of Travis County the why, how, and where our food, clothing, and agricultural products are produced. Students rotated between 7 different stations which included; dairy, bees, urban agriculture, the game warden, Eat a Rainbow, poultry, and goats.

10

Total number of
schools hosted

628

Total number of
students in attendance

50

Total number
of volunteers



2024 TRAVIS COUNTY SCIENCE OF AGRICULTURE DAY OCTOBER 2, 2024

This year, on October 2nd, Travis County Extension Agents Morgan Newton, 4-H and Youth Development Agent, and Kayli Higerd, Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent, partnered to host the 2024 Travis County Science of Agriculture Day event and to make it bigger and better than the previous year. This event hosted students across 4 school districts. The number of students attending this year increased by slightly over 68% with 90 teachers and parents also participating. The great success of the event would not have been possible without the help of dozens of hard-working volunteers who helped as group leaders, presenters, and overall event support.



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**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.