

# Bi-Monthly Newsletter

DC EXTENSION

January/February



## Here's what has happened in the last month and what's to come!

As spring begins to bloom, we're excited to bring you the latest updates on all things happening in our community.

This month, we're focusing on the renewal and growth that come with the season, offering helpful agricultural tips for the months ahead, as well as resources to help you make the most of this time of year.

In this issue, you'll find highlights on our dedicated Master Gardeners and the impactful work they're doing to help beautify and educate our community. You'll also learn more about the exciting 4-H programs we're offering this year, fostering youth development and leadership in Dallas County.

This month, we're especially proud to share the wonderful work our agents have been doing, helping families and

communities throughout Dallas County.

As always, your involvement makes all the difference—whether through donating your time, resources, or simply spreading the word about our work. Together, we can continue to grow and make a positive impact on the lives of our neighbors.

Thank you for being such an essential part of our community.

Enjoy this month's newsletter and have a wonderful spring!

*Dallas County Extension*



### In this newsletter you can expect:

Community Updates/ Events  
PG.1-2

Five Minute Recipe  
PG.2

Agricultural Tips  
PG. 2

Stories of Impact  
PG.3

Stories of Impact  
PG. 4



## Community Updates

The 2025 Master Gardener class is off to a strong start with an insightful lecture led by Dr. Masabani, a professor and extension vegetable specialist. During the session, participants explored a wide variety of vegetables, gaining valuable knowledge on how to properly care for and maintain healthy crops. This year's program welcomes 47 new Master Gardeners who are now eligible to begin earning service hours. To achieve full certification, each participant must complete 50 hours of volunteer work, applying their newly acquired skills to community out-

reach and education. Once certified, these Master Gardener's will play a vital role in promoting sustainable gardening practices, leading programs, and sharing their expertise to support local gardening initiatives. The Master Gardener program continues to be an essential resource for fostering horticultural education and community engagement. With this new cohort, the tradition of spreading knowledge and inspiring greener communities is set to thrive in 2025 and beyond.



## Agricultural Tips

*from Agent Matt Orwatt*

1. **Prepare Soil:** Test and amend soil with compost or organic matter.
2. **Plant Early Crops:** Start cold-tolerant veggies like lettuce and peas.
3. **Prune:** Trim dead branches from trees and shrubs.
4. **Check for Pests:** Monitor for pests and use natural controls.
5. **Mulch:** Apply mulch to retain moisture and reduce weeds.
6. **Water Smart:** Water deeply in the morning for healthy growth.
7. **Rotate Crops:** Rotate plants to maintain soil health.
8. **Start Seeds Indoors:** Give long-growing plants a head start indoors.



## Pasta Salad

*from Agent Terri Wesley*

### Ingredients:

- 2 cups cooked pasta (any shape), 3 tablespoons vegetable oil, 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar, 1 teaspoon salt, ¼ teaspoon black pepper, ½ teaspoon garlic powder, ½ teaspoon Italian seasoning, 1 pinch of crushed red pepper flakes (optional), 1 cup diced cucumber, 1 large tomato, seeds removed and chopped, ½ green pepper, diced, 1 small onion, minced, ½ cup frozen peas

### Instructions:

- Cook the pasta, drain, and cool it in the refrigerator
- Wash all vegetables, and remove seeds from tomato
- Collect, dice, and measure all ingredients before starting to prepare the recipe
- Whisk together oil, vinegar, salt, black pepper, garlic powder, Italian seasoning, and crushed red pepper flakes (if using) in large bowl
- Add the pasta, cucumber, tomato, green pepper, onion and peas.
- Mix all ingredients together until the vegetables and pasta are evenly coated.
- Serve immediately. It tastes even better when refrigerated for at least an hour. Cover when storing in the fridge and stir again before serving.
- Refrigerate the leftovers within 2 hours. Eat within 3 to 5 days.

**\*Removing tomato seeds:** turn the tomato on its side so the stem faces to the right. Cut the tomato down the center and use ¼ teaspoon to spoon out the seeds. Be creative! Use whole wheat pasta.



## Stories of Impact: Addressing Youth Unemployment through Workforce Development

Youth unemployment remains significantly higher than the general population, widening economic disparities and creating long-term challenges for young people entering the labor market. Without adequate support, these individuals face ongoing economic instability, limiting their potential and economic mobility. Research from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) highlights that only 35% of low-income youth have access to internships, compared to 58% of their higher-income peers, underscoring disparities in career training opportunities.

Recognizing this urgent issue, Prairie View A&M University Community Extension's Community and Economic Development (CED) Unit took action by participating in the Texans Can Academy – Pleasant Grove Youth Career Fair.

Agent Alexis Horne engaged with 42 young adults (ages 15-19), providing them with critical resources to support

their academic and professional growth. Students received guidance on college enrollment, access to Google Certification Scholarship opportunities, and insights into effective career exploration strategies. These initiatives aim to equip young people with the tools they need to secure stable employment and build successful futures.

By offering targeted educational and workforce development programs, Prairie View A&M University's CED Unit is working to bridge the gap in career readiness, ensuring that all youth – regardless of background – have opportunity to thrive in an increasingly competitive job market.



students in line for the career booths at  
the Texas Can Academy Pleasant Grove  
Youth Career Fair





## Promoting Health through Nutrition and Movement at Cardinal Farrell Community Center

Agent Carolina Veloza partnered with the Catholic Charities' Cardinal Farrell Community Center recently to host the **Walk and Talk: Fruits and Vegetables & Zumba** program, an initiative designed to improve nutrition and physical activity among SNAP recipients and limited-resource audiences. Research shows that these populations often struggle with food insecurity, poor diets, and limited access to healthy foods, increasing their risk for chronic diseases like obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. With obesity rates at 35% and physical inactivity at 29% in the community, this program aimed to drive meaningful change.

A total of **85 Latina women** participated in the program, split into a **morning group (45 participants)** and an **afternoon group (40 participants)**. Over four weeks, participants met weekly with an educator to engage in physical activity and discuss key nutrition topics, including selecting, growing, preparing, and consuming fruits and vegetables.

The impact was remarkable. The percentage of participants who consumed **more than one cup of vegetables per day increased from 85% to 100%** demonstrating improved dietary habits. Additionally, screen time on non-workdays decreased, with those limiting usage to **2-3 hours or less rising from 65% to 79%**. Most importantly, participants significantly increased their physical activity, going from **less than one day per week to at least three days per week**.

Programs like Walk and Talk continue to make a lasting difference in the community by fostering healthier lifestyles, promoting food security, and encouraging sustainable wellness habits.

*Thank you for reading!*



visit our  
webpage!

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