

# CAMERON COUNTY EXTENSION QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

## *What We Do*

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension is a unique education agency that provides programs, tools, and resources on a local and statewide level that teach people how to improve agriculture and food production, advance health practices, protect the environment, strengthen the economy, and enrich youth.

In all 254 counties, County Extension Agents serve families, youth, communities and businesses throughout the state.

## Extension Staff

### **Marco Ponce**

County Extension Agent  
Agriculture & Natural Resources

### **Tony Reisinger**

County Extension Agent  
Coastal & Marine Resources

### **Lilian Mezquida**

County Extension Agent  
Family & Community Health

### **Jennifer Herrera**

County Extension Agent  
Horticulture

### **Klarissa Cantu**

County Extension Agent  
4-H & Youth Development

### **Gloria Carter**

Cooperative Extension Agent  
Family & Community Health

### **Guadalupe Castro**

Cooperative Extension Agent  
4-H & Youth Development

### **Melissa DeLeon**

Expanded Food & Nutrition Agent

### **Nidia Garcia**

BLT - Extension Agent

### **Esmeralda Avila**

BLT - Nutrition Education Associate

### **Kristina Loreda**

BLT - Extension Agent

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## Contact Us:

### **Cameron County Extension Office**

1390 W. Expressway 83  
San Benito, TX 78586  
956-361-8236

## Visit Us At:

[www.cameron.agrilife.org](http://www.cameron.agrilife.org)  
[www.facebook.com/agrilife.cameron](https://www.facebook.com/agrilife.cameron)

# Family & Community Health

By: Lilian Mezquida, CEA Family & Community Health



[bit.ly/FB\\_AgriLifeCameron](https://bit.ly/FB_AgriLifeCameron)



[bit.ly/CAM\\_FCH](https://bit.ly/CAM_FCH)

*Due to coronavirus also known as COVID-19,  
I had to find new ways to continue offering our programs.*

## Online Programs

### Cooking Well with Diabetes



A healthy cooking school designed to help people with or without diabetes and anyone that prepares food for them. **132** people participated in this program

### Cooking for the Holidays



In Collaboration with the Harlingen Public Library

Healthy recipes for the holidays, we had **69** participants

### Parenting Connections



**29** participants and only **17** completed the program

### AgriLife.learn.tamu.edu



We offer a wide variety of online courses for professionals seeking to fulfill state mandate requirements. This year we had **1,911** childcare providers that completed different courses.

Most Popular Courses were:

- Providing High-Quality Experiences in Emergency Child Care Setting During COVID-19 Year 2
- Decision-Making about When and How to Operate Child Care Programs during COVID-19 Year 2
- Navigating Child Care Systems during COVID-19 Year 2

# Cooperative Extension Family & Community Health



By: Gloria Carter, CEP - Family & Community Health



[bit.ly/Facebook\\_CEPFCH](https://bit.ly/Facebook_CEPFCH)



[bit.ly/CEP\\_FCH](https://bit.ly/CEP_FCH)

## HCISD Family Plus Program

Approximately **230 participants** attended evening sessions during the Harlingen CISD Parental Involvement Department's Family Plus Program wherein Cameron County CEP/FCH Agent Gloria presented on topics from the "Balanced Living" and "Strengthening Families" curriculums.

Topics Included:

- Stress Management
- Mental Health
- Rules/Rewards Systems



Strengthening Families  
Foundation

Balanced  
Living

## Appointment to Board of Directors

On November 20, 2020, Gloria Carter, Cameron County Family & Community Health Agent with the Cooperative Extension Program, was appointed to the Board of Directors of Texas Association of Promotores & Cameron Health Workers.

The Texas Association of Promotores & Community Health Workers' (TAPCHW) mission is to support and expand opportunities for the Community Health Worker and Promotores professions at the state and local level through advocacy, education, empowerment, and policy.

A Community Health Worker (CHW) who, with or without compensation, is a liaison and provides a cultural mediation between health care, social services and the community. A promotor(a) or community health worker is a trusted member, and has a close understanding of, the ethnicity, language, socio-economic status, and life experiences of the community served.

A promotor(a) or community health worker assists people to gain access to needed services and build individual community and system capacity. They help increase health knowledge and self-sufficiency through a range of activities such as outreach, patient navigation and follow-up community health education and information, informal counseling, social support, advocacy, and participation in clinical research.

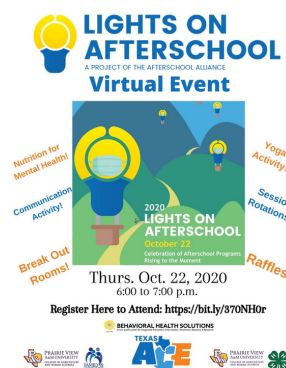
"AS a Certified Community Health Worker for the State of Texas, I am honored to have been appointed to TAPCHW's Board of Directors. It is my desire to advocate, educate and empower my fellow colleagues as we work towards impacting and improving the lives of our clientele" stated Mrs. Carter

## Contact Tracing

During the month of September, FCH Agent Gloria Carter, continued her work in conducting Contact Tracing for the Texas Department of State Health Service wherein she made and fielded incoming calls from Texans who had or may have had an exposure to someone with COVID-193

## Lights on Afterschool

On October 22nd, CEP/FCH Agent Gloria Carter, facilitated a presentation on "Nutrition for Mental Health" during the Harlingen CISD ACE's "Lights Afterschool" Program. Over 60 participants attended the session wherein they learned how eating from 5 different food groups aids in mental health and overall well-being.





# Better Living For Texans



By: Nidia Garcia, Extension Agent Better Living for Texans  
Esmeralda Avila, Nutrition Education Associate



Better Living for Texans Cameron County [bit.ly/CameronBLT](https://bit.ly/CameronBLT)

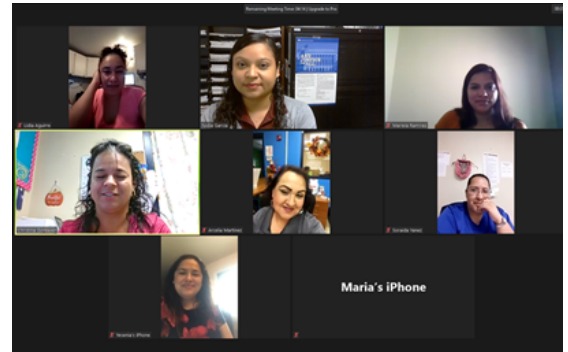
## Fresh Start to a Healthier You

A total of **214** adult participants graduated from the "Fresh Start to a Healthier You" program.



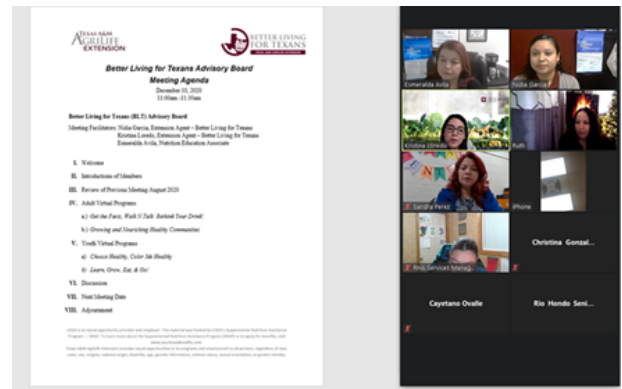
## Get the Facts

A total of **21** adult participants graduated from the "Get the Facts" program.



## BLT Advisory Board Committee

The Better Living for Texans Advisory Board Committee met on December 10, 2020 to discuss youth virtual programs available for our community.



# Growing & Nourishing Healthy Communities

By: Kristina Loreda, Extension Agent - Better Living for Texans

The Better Living for Texans Growing & Nourishing Healthy Communities (GNHC) Program worked on gardening videos for a collaborative multi-county approach to virtual GNHC programming. These videos are the complete series and available to be used as virtual programming and supplemental educational tools for virtual learning. We started 2021 with a full GNHC virtual program with Brownsville Independent School District. Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities and Learn Grow, Eat, Go! are available to be delivered completely virtually!





# Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program



By: Melissa DeLeon, EFNEP Agent

## EFNEP MISSION

*Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) is designed to assist limited resource audiences in acquiring the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and changed-behaviors necessary for nutritionally sound diets, and to contribute to their personal development and the improvement of the total family diet and nutritional well-being.*

### EFNEP Offers Practical Lessons On:

- Building a healthy plate
- Eating the right amount of calories
- Setting limits
- Planning, shopping, fixing, and eating more meals at home
- Being active
- Keeping food safe
- Encouraging family meal time behavior
- Practicing healthy behavior

**EFNEP-Virtual Education Adult Enrollment**  
September - January : **72** with **43** graduated

**EFNEP-Virtual Education Youth Participants**  
in Cameron County : **939**

## Distance Education with EFNEP

Our educators now have the resources to conduct EFNEP nutrition education classes at a distance with the option of classes taught one-on-one or in small groups. EFNEP has several options available for both adults and youth.

**[bit.ly/EFNEPDistanceEducation](https://bit.ly/EFNEPDistanceEducation)**

### Healthy Bites, Healthy Moves - Telephone Series

- 6 lesson series - led by an EFNEP educator for no more than 30 minutes each
- Taught one on one or with a small group at a convenient time for the participants
- Participants learn about healthy eating (MyPlate), family meal planning, budgeting at the store, food safety and the importance of physical activity
- Participants receive an emailed guide of visuals to help follow along
- Graduation certificates are emailed upon completion of the 6 sessions

### Eat Smart, Move More - Online Series

- 6 lesson series - each lesson is 45-60 minutes in length
- Self-led online learning through an interactive series
- Participants learn about healthy meeting (MyPlate), family meal planning, budgeting at the store, food safety and the importance of physical activity
- Educators can conduct discussion interaction via a closed Facebook group that participants can choose to be a member
- Graduation certificates are emailed upon completion of the 6 sessions

### Teen Cuisine

- 6 - lesson series - lasting 30-60minutes
- Hands-on cooking program geared for 6th to 12th graders and aligned with PE, Health & Science TEKS
- Series can be customized to fit the needs of the students and school
- Students learn about basic nutrition, MyPlate, making healthy food choices, food safety, basic culinary skills, and the importance of physical activity
- Each session includes group discussion and activities, physical activity, and a cooking demonstration
- Enhancement items are distributed during the series the reinforce key messages
- Each student receives a certificate of completion at the end of the series.

### Healthy Bites, Healthy Moves - Virtual Series

- 6 lesson series - lead by an EFNEP educator for no more than 30-45 minutes each lesson
- Taught on one one or with a small group at a convenient time for the participants
- Participants learn about healthy eating (MyPlate), family meal planning, budgeting at the store, food safety and the importance of physical activity
- Educators can conduct discussion-based learning using a virtual platform to further engage participants
- Participants receive an emailed guide of visuals to help follow along
- Graduation certificates are emailed upon completion of the 6 sessions

### Healthy Teens, Healthy Future - Virtual or Online Course

- 6 - lesson series lasting about 30 minutes each
- Program is geared towards 6th - 12th grade
- Self-led online learning through an interactive series
- Students learn about basic nutrition, MyPlate, making healthy food choices, food safety, basic culinary skills, and the importance of physical activity
- Each session will include a short lesson and a recorded recipe demonstration
- Certificate of completion at the end of the program

### Healthy Hero Adventures

- 6 - lesson series lasting about 30 minutes each
- Program is geared towards K-5th grade and aligned with PE, Health & Science TEKS
- Interactive lessons led by an EFNEP educator, lessons can be customized to fit the needs of the students and school
- Students learned basic nutrition including: MyPlate, making healthy food choices, food safety, and the importance of physical activity
- Each session will include a short lesson and an optional recipe demonstration
- Graduation certificates are delivered upon completion of the series

# Agriculture & Natural Resources

By: Marco Ponce, CEA Agriculture & Natural Resources



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[bit.ly/Cameron\\_Agriculture](https://bit.ly/Cameron_Agriculture)



## Bull Gain Test

Rio Grande Valley County Agents conducted the Bull Gain and Heifer Development program at the Rio Beef Feed yard in Raymondville. This program provides ranchers with performance data related to average daily gain, ribeye area, marbling score, and scrotal circumference.

Performance data is compiled and evaluated with awards being given to the rancher with the top performing bulls.

Top performing bulls are also allowed to be included in an online sale after this program is concluded.



## RGV Ranchers Roundup

Rio Grande Valley Agents conducted Rancher's Round-Up Program for local beef cattle producers.

### Some of the topics discussed were

- CFAP -2 The Coronavirus Food Assistance Program
- Range and Forage Decision Making Tools
- Managing Stocker Calves
- White Tailed Deer Management
- Livestock Buyer Fraud.

This was an online program that benefitted ranchers from throughout the Rio Grande Valley.

## PPE Distribution

The Cameron County AgriLife Extension office aided in the distribution of two separate shipments of Personal Protective Equipment to the County Elections Office.

This first shipment included cloth masks and face shields to be used by election workers.

The second shipment included 83 gallons of hand sanitizer to be used at the various polling locations throughout Cameron County.



# Coastal & Marine

By: Tony Reisinger, CEA - Coastal & Marine

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## Cameron County Master Naturalists Programs

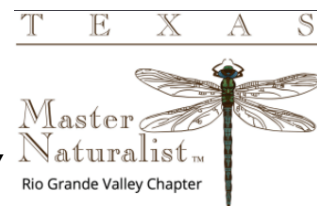
Our two Texas Master Naturalist Chapters comprised of over **500 members**, Rio Grande Valley Chapter [rgvctmn.org](http://rgvctmn.org) and South Texas Border Chapter [southtexasborder.wix.com/txm](http://southtexasborder.wix.com/txm) each held a total of six educational meetings this quarter with **172 attending** via Webex or Facebook live.

The Rio Grande Valley Chapter posted **10 nature blogs** (*four published in Valley newspapers*), and our **quarterly chapter newsletter "The Chachalaca"** now shared with the South Texas Border Chapter.

Chapter websites provided information on volunteer activities available to naturalists, upcoming classes, and events. Member contacts and volunteer hours were down significantly this quarter due to limits from COVID, **66** and **1349 hours** respectively (**total value of \$38,488**). The combined online classes and field trips will begin online in January and end in April 2021. **Fifty-nine trainees** are registered as of December 30.

Texas Coastal Naturalists, who were active in saving over **200 downed** pelicans during strong northers in 2020, brought attention and resulting action by TXDOT who replaced the upwind west barrier on highway 48. The test was the first severe norther of 2021. Seventy-five pelicans were downed and nineteen were lost. It seems the Highway 48 modification worked for the east side of the highway. The west side, downwind from the center barrier is where pelicans encountered turbulence. The road may require more modification or a speed limit reduction.

Coastal Naturalists held three refresher training courses and one online course for Red Tide Rangers at the UTRGV Coastal Studies Lab in October. The Rangers will be participating in a Gulf-wide grant next year, called "Every Beach Every Day" from NOAA to expand and accurately forecast red tide bloom aerosol occurrence and intensity. This has great potential to reduce the economic impact to recreation in Cameron County during red tide bloom.



## Cameron County Fisheries

Shrimp production by the Cameron County offshore fleet of 183 vessels this quarter was varied. Frequent storms kept the fleet in port during heavy weather. After the storms, production increased making up for lost fishing time. It is predicted our 2020 catch may exceed that in 2019 in spite of the reduction in H2B visas for crews which kept many of our vessels from fishing this year. Shrimp prices have been up as was fuel this quarter. We continued our TED and bycatch reduction device BRD compliance inspections, checking 12 vessels, 44 TEDS and 43 BRDs this quarter.

Recreational fishing increased as people sought more outdoor activities this quarter. The inshore bait shrimp fleet benefitted from this phenomenon in recreational fishing during the first round of COVID, as did our charter fleet, some with increased charters of 25%.

*Octolasmis lowei*, a small relative of the common gooseneck barnacle is suspected to have caused havoc with the South Texas blue crab fishery in 2020, and as far north as Seadrift. The parasite attaches in the gill chambers of the crabs and interferes with respiration. It thrives in high salinity water and rains last summer contributed to a decline in infestations. However, the blue crab population in the Laguna Madre declined significantly according to crabbers and production is down as of December.

Texas Sea Grant gave us a small grant to monitor for this in 2021.

We collected oysters from San Martin channel this quarter for a study by Texas A&M Corpus Christi to determine growth and salinity tolerance. Oysters from Cameron County may be more salinity tolerant and faster growing than those on the upper coast and are a potential candidate for genetic crosses in aquaculture.



# Horticulture

By: Jennifer Herrera, CEA - Horticulture

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## Cameron County Master Gardener

### 2019 Master Gardener Graduation



16 graduates

### 1st Virtual Plant Sale



80+ Participants

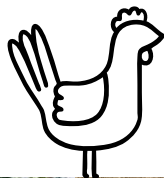
### Online Master Gardener Training Pilot:



23 Participants

### Small Acreage: Chicken Farm Visit

*Grandma's Chicken Coop  
now selling at the  
Harlingen Farmers Market*



### RGV Citrus & Vegetable Show

*Over 100 Participants*





# 4-H & Youth Development

By: Klarissa Cantu, CEA - 4H & Youth Development



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[bit.ly/Cam4HYouth](https://bit.ly/Cam4HYouth)



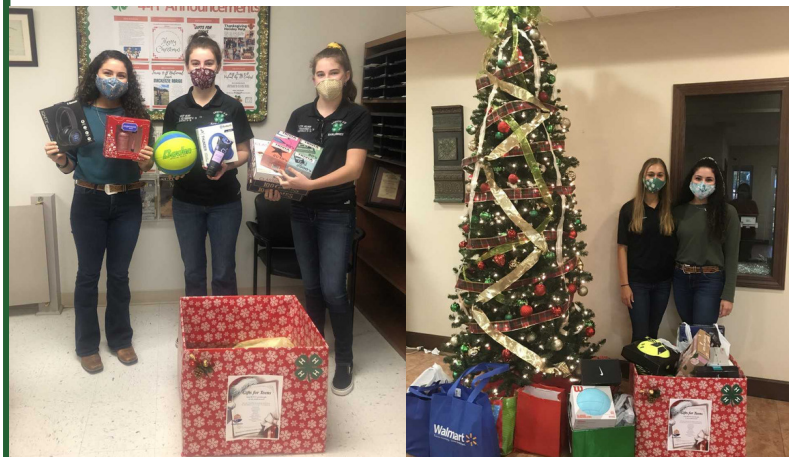
## Thanksgiving Holiday Help

Cameron County 4-H Council delivered thanksgiving meals to Parental Involvement Center in partnership with Texas Farm Bureau for **10 families** in the Harlingen School District Area.



## Christmas Holiday Help

Cameron County 4-H donated items for the "Gifts for Teens" gift drive put on by RGV Credit Union.



## Recognition



Bailey Helmer from Arroyo 4-H represented Cameron County 4-H at the Virtual 4-H Contest Invitational put on by Utah 4-H. This contest was put on in place of the Western National 4-H Roundup which was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This contest was a national contest and Bailey competed with 4-H kids from all over where she received **Reserve Grande Champion** in the Fashion Revue - Construction category. **Congratulations!**



# Cooperative Extension 4-H & Youth Development

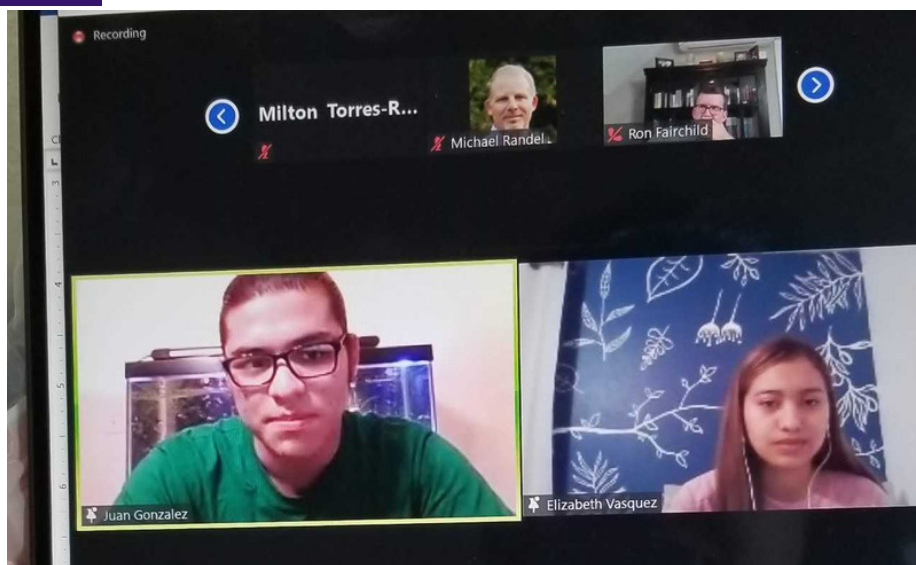
By: Guadalupe Castro, CEP 4-H & Youth Development



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## True Leaders in Equity Institute

**2** Cameron County youth participated in a True Leaders of Equity Institute and presented their idea for an equity project to be conducted in their community. Their project won them a **\$500 grant** to implement in their community.



## 4-H National STEM Day

4-H National STEM Day was on October 10, 2020, **10 youth** from Cameron County participated in the 4-H National STEM activity.



## Park Clean Up Community Service

On November 12, **12 youth** and adults from Future Leaders of Brownsville participated in the Park Clean Up Community Service.





# TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION



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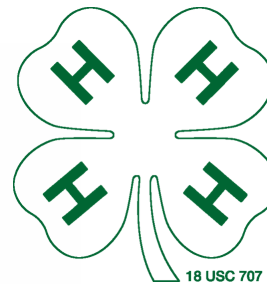
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FAMILY &  
CONSUMER  
SCIENCES



AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY



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BETTER LIVING  
FOR TEXANS

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION



The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife.

The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating