

CAMERON COUNTY EXTENSION NEWSLETTER

July 2021 - September 2021

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.

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BLT - Extension Agent

COASTAL & MARINE

By: Tony Reisinger, CEA -Coastal & Marine Resources



In July, we trained weighmasters at two major RGV fishing tournaments. We demonstrated fish measuring, weighing and identification for over 1200 anglers at the Texas International and Port Mansfield tourneys.



Cameron County marine extension agent Tony Reisinger is participating in a 3-year bycatch reduction project to develop more efficient bycatch reduction devices BRDs for the shrimp industry. Estimated shrimp loss from existing devices can be 5-10%. Fish bycatch reduction is estimated at ~30% and major goals of the project are to increase that number and decrease shrimp loss. Pictured is the Composite BRD (green netting) behind a TED on the right.



We held an oyster farming workshop in August at the UTRGV Coastal Studies Lab. Oyster aquaculture is now legal in Texas and UTRGV recently completed a successful demonstration of grow-out in the Lower Laguna Madre. Our Laguna Madre oysters are tolerant of hypersaline conditions and soon we may see oyster farms in the Laguna and we will be able to enjoy nicely cupped and delicious farmed native oysters.



Agent Reisinger conducted Red Tide Ranger training at the UTRGV Coastal Studies Lab in July. He is participating in a NOAA grant to train volunteers in Texas to monitor red tide with a new device, the HABscope using facial recognition and Artificial Intelligence to identify and count red tide cells. Should we experience a red tide in the future, this project will enable prediction of bloom movement and aerosol intensity enabling the public to access unaffected beach areas during a bloom.



Master Naturalist volunteers from our two chapters South Texas Border Chapter and Rio Grande Valley Chapter comprising over 500 naturalists, participated in monitoring the sea turtle nesting season this quarter. They volunteered at Sea Turtle Inc assisting in numerous duties from beach patrols to locate and transfer eggs into protected corrals, to working in the sea turtle hospital caring for injured turtles. Pictured is an endangered Kemp's ridley which has just completed laying her eggs on South Padre Island the 4th of July.



FAMILY & COMMUNITY HEALTH

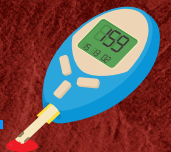
By: Lilian Mezquida, CEA - Family & Community Health

Child Passenger Safety Event

The event was an excellent partnership between Texas A&M AgriLife Extension County Cameron County, the Texas A&M AgriLife Passenger Safety and KidSafe Initiative Project, San Benito ISD, San Benito Family and Community Engagement, the Driscoll Health Plan, Alton Police, and the Texas Department of Transportation Pharr District. Many thanks to our technicians and volunteers who worked so hard to make sure that all the children left safer than they arrived and that their parents were educated on best practice for child passenger safety. Thank you to Driscoll Health, Texas A&M AgriLife Brooks, Cameron and Hidalgo Counties, Harlingen Police Department, Behavioral Health Solutions, and Tip of Texas Family Outreach for providing technician support for the event. All our volunteer support from the San Benito ISD was very much appreciated. It was very evident that the parents were appreciative of the education they received at the event.



COOKING WELL WITH DIABETES



A healthy cooking school designed to help people with or without diabetes and anyone that prepares food for them. The first class was at Harlingen Salvation Army and the participants learned about Carbohydrates Foods and healthy recipes. The last class is on October 20, 2021.



STRONG PEOPLE STRONG BODIES



The objective is to improve the health and well-being of middle-aged and older adults by increasing access to structured, safe, and effective strength training programs. I'm already trained to offer this program.



AGRICULTURE

By: Marco Ponce, CEA- Agriculture

Grain Harvest



County Extension Agents harvested a six Variety Grain Sorghum Demonstration plot in order to measure which varieties performed best here in Cameron County. Agents utilized a weigh buggy in order to measure the yield in pounds for the grain sorghum being harvested. Agents then took samples of each variety and then proceeded to test the grain for quality measures such as bushel weight and moisture content. This Grain Sorghum Demonstration plot was replicated three times in order to ensure the accuracy of the data being collected.



Cotton Harvest

County Extension Agents harvested a ten Variety Cotton Demonstration plot in order to measure which variety performed best under our soil and weather conditions. The volunteer cooperator was able to take weights of each module being produced in order to gauge which variety yielded the most pounds of cotton. Agents then took samples of each variety so that the quality of the cotton fiber could be tested for grade, staple, and micronaire. This cotton demonstration plot was replicated three times in order to ensure the accuracy of the data being collected.



Corn Harvest



County Extension Agents harvested a four Variety Corn Demonstration plot in order to measure which varieties performed best under our soil and weather conditions. Agents utilized a weigh buggy in order to measure the yield in pounds of the corn varieties being harvested. Agents then took samples of each variety in order to measure quality indicators such as bushel weight and moisture content. This Corn demonstration plot was replicated three times in order to ensure the accuracy of the data being collected.



BETTER LIVING FOR TEXANS

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

Choose Healthy



Is a four-session series geared toward middle school aged children. The purpose of this series is to help young teenagers understand basic nutrition and wellness principles. 38 youth completed the Choose Healthy nutrition program. (Picture provided from Rockwell Manor Apartments)



Savor the Flavor Workshop

A Collaboration between the Better Living for Texans and EFNEP program where participants learned about Container Gardening, Food Safety, Knife Skills, and a Salsa Recipe Demonstration. 21 adults participated in this event.



2021 BLT and EFNEP Statewide Training - San Antonio, TX.



Esmeralda Avila, Nutrition Education Associate was recognized as an Outstanding Better Living for Texans Educator

Kristina Loreda, Extension Agent - Better Living for Texans was recognized for a multi-county collaboration program.

Veterans from The South Texas Afghanistan Iraq Veteran Association help build 4 raised bed gardens. They planted cucumbers, lettuce, green beans and spinach.

GROWING & NOURISHING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

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





PRAIRIE VIEW
A&M UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
AND HUMAN SCIENCES



Cooperative Extension Program

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION FAMILY & COMMUNITY HEALTH

By: Gloria Carter, CEP- Family & Community Health

Youth

"Discover MyPlate"



During the month of July, Gloria Carter, an Extension Agent in Cameron County with the Prairie View A&M University Cooperative Extension Program, conducted a youth nutrition education program for over 70 Pre-Kinder and Kindergarten students enrolled in the Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District's Multi-Language Summer Program.

"Discover MyPlate is an exciting educational journey through the world of nutrition and health — developed under the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Team Nutrition initiative. The fun and inquiry-based lessons cultivate the development of healthy food choices and physically active lifestyles during a critical developmental and learning period for children. Children become food-savvy as they practice counting, reading, writing, and more. Fun characters (The Five Food Group Friends - Reggie Veggie, Farrah Fruit, Dean Protein, Mary Dairy, and Jane the Grain) and developmentally appropriate activities engaged children in:

- Exploring healthy choices from each of the MyPlate food groups
- Discovering the colorful variety of fruits and vegetables and how they grow
- Identifying feelings of hunger and fullness
- Selecting balanced meals and healthy snacks
- Experiencing the fun and importance of being physically active



Additionally, the youth participants were introduced to a variety of hands-on learning activities, from engaging in dramatic play and "checking out" groceries, to becoming part of a food group themselves while they learn to classify foods. The students also learned the lyrics and a choreographed dance to the song Reach for the Sky which taught them about the five food groups while they were being physically active. Key to the program's success was the utilization of the summer program's teachers and paraprofessionals, and a Texas A&M AgriLife summer intern as volunteers who offered their assistance in helping the children cut, paste, read, and write.

Upon completion of the program, the students received a certificate of completion, an activity monitor, and a goodie bag with activity sheets to help keep them motivate to eat health and stay active at home.



"Kids Fest"



Provided nutrition education using a MyPlate Turtle at the Tobacco Prevention & Control Coalition's 7th Annual Kid Fest "Tales & Tails" on August 5th to 174 youth participants.





EXPANDED FOOD AND NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM (EFNEP)

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 In:

Basic Nutrition
Food Preparation
Food Budget Management
Food Safety

All in settings convenient for the participants.

EFNEP also encourages a physical activity component for both adult & youth participants. Program graduates reflect significant, lasting improvement in eating behaviors and healthy food habits

Our total EFNEP-Adult enrollment numbers for the months of July thru September 482; of which, 455 graduated.

Our total EFNEP-Youth enrollment numbers for the months of July thru September 32; of which, 32 graduated.

Volunteers donated 914.8 hours of work to EFNEP in Cameron. At the Texas rate of \$25.10/hr, this volunteerism has a minimum dollar volume \$22,961.48.

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 learn 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

Healthy Bites, Healthy Moves

- 8 lesson series - led by an EFNEP educator for no more than 30-45 minutes each lesson
- 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
- 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 8 sessions



Cameron County EFNEP Volunteers



On September 14, 2021, EFNEP received a 3rd bi-county sponsorship of \$2,000.00 from Superior HealthPlan/Centene Group; of which, Cameron County received (\$1,000.00). Through the help of the sponsorship, EFNEP was able to partner with Marylou Cavazos, Superior HealthPlan, Kristina Loreda and Nidia Garcia, Better Living for Texans in conducting a Savor the Flavor for Superior Bodies Workshop held at Tierta Santa Ministries in San Benito, TX where 21 participants learn about container gardening, food safety, knife skills, and prepared a healthy cucumber salsa recipe. EFNEP was able to purchase vegetables of the recipe conducted during our food demonstration and items such as chef knives, measuring spoons, measuring cups, spatulas, tubber ware containers, rubber hand brushes, cutting boards, and hand sanitizers for the EFNEP participants in attendance.



CC Group



Tere Nutrition Group



4-H & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

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



The Cameron County 4-H had our Election Convention on Tuesday, July 13th for those 4-H members that would like to run for a District 4-H officer position. We had 5 kids run for an office and one of those kids, Avery Fohn, was elected as the District 12 4-H 1st Vice President.

Cameron County 4-H held our 4-H awards interviews the week of July 26th for those that submitted an application and record book. These awards were then given at our Cameron County 4-H Awards Banquet on September 11th.

The results of those awards are below:



Senior Awards

Gold Star – Avery Fohn, Mia Ponce

I Dare You – Zachary Gray, Bailey Helmer

Outstanding Senior – Julia Macmanus, Ryleigh Greer

Carl Macomb – Naomi Macmanus

Adult Leader Awards

4-H Club Manager of the Year – Lisa Fohn

4-H Adult Leader of the Year – Tate Helmer

Intermediate Awards

Outstanding Intermediate – Tatum Helmer

Silver Star – Keaton Fohn



Junior Awards

Outstanding Jr – Abigail Neu, Emma Neu

Jr Rookie of the Year – Payten Malone

Bronze Star – Emery Morrow



Our Cameron County 4-H Council officer team created introduction videos of themselves that we posted to our Cameron County 4-H facebook page.



Cameron County 4-H will be hosting a Food Show/Food Challenge Workshop on Thursday, September 30th at 6pm for those members who are new to the project and to inform them of what to expect for the upcoming County contest.

HORTICULTURE

By: Jennifer Herrera, CEA - Horticulture

Horticulture Agents and Specialists Professional Development Conference

Hosted Over 40 AgriLife Horticulture Agents and Specialists

Hybrid Program

Master Gardeners Presented on
Lemon Herbs and provide samples
on culinary uses.



MGs distributing Texas Superstar Plants



Tropical and Sub Tropical Fruit Tasting



Sabal Palm Presentation by the
Gorgas Science Foundation



TDA Presentation



Sabal Palm Sanctuary Tour

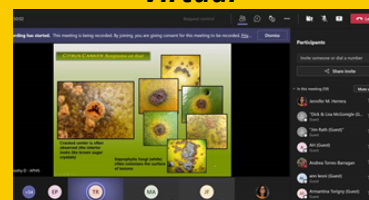


South Padre Island
Birding Center Tour



89
PARTICIPANTS
online

Virtual



In Person



Master Gardener Volunteering throughout Cameron County.



Rain Garden @ Los Fresnos Nature Park

150

HOURS
VOLUNTEERED



August Master Gardener
Board Meeting



**CITRUS PEST, AND
DISEASE PROGRAM**



MG- Education Garden



OVER **400** VOLUNTEERED
HOURS



OVER
250



HOURS
VOLUNTEERED
@
SUNSHINE
HAVEN
BEAUTIFICATION
PROJECT



Tree planting Ceremony to
celebrate the generous
donations towards the garden
affected by the freeze.



**SUNSHINE HAVEN
BOARD MEMBERS**

