

# CAMERON COUNTY EXTENSION NEWSLETTER

*October 2021 - December 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.

## IN THIS ISSUE:

1. Horticulture.....
2. Coastal & Marine.....
3. Family & Community Health.....
4. Agriculture & Natural Resources.....
5. Better Living for Texas.....
6. CEP Family & Community Health.....
7. Expanded Food & Nutrition.....
8. 4-H & Youth Development.....

## CONTACT US:



Cameron County Extension Office  
1390 W. Expressway 83  
San Benito, TX 78586  
956-361-8236

## VISIT US AT:



Find us on  
**Facebook**

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

## 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

*Beatriz Loya*

EFNEP Agent

*Nidia Garcia*

BLT - Extension Agent

*Esmeralda Avila*

BLT - Nutrition Education Associate

*Kristina Loreda*

BLT - Extension Agent



# HORTICULTURE



By: Jennifer Herrera, CEA - Horticulture



## CONTINUING EDUCATION CLASSES



Continuing education classes on plant propagation, butterfly gardening and container gardening were held for Master Gardeners

## MASTER GARDENER RECOGNITION



The end of the year Master Gardener recognition event was held at the Master Gardener Education Garden. Master Gardeners and Interns completed over 2260.58 service hours.

## QUINTA MAZATLAN TOUR



Master Gardener Interns toured Quinta Mazatlan and learned about native plants, RGV birds and butterflies.

## YOUTH CITRUS AND VEGETABLE SHOW



2021 Youth Citrus and Vegetable Show took place at the Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show grounds. Contests included Food Challenge, Garden Plot contest, Ag Product ID, and Vegetable/Fruit Poster Contest. Over 70 posters were submitted on fruits and vegetables from youth throughout the Rio Grande Valley.



# COASTAL & MARINE

By: Tony Reisinger, CEA -Coastal & Marine Resources



## SHRIMP PRODUCTION



Cameron County preliminary estimates for 2021 shrimp production: 9.7 million pounds worth \$47.2 million (landings provided by Texas Parks & Wildlife)



## SEASIDE CHATS



County marine extension agent Tony Reisinger and Sea Grant planning specialist Kate DeGennaro gave an online talk in December about the impacts of the February freeze.

## MASTER NATURALIST



Our Rio Grande Valley Chapter Texas Master Naturalist "Pelican Squadron" published a pamphlet to make motorists aware of downed pelicans on highways during winter storms.

We have lost over 700 pelicans just at the Gayman bridge on Highway 48 and 250 have been rescued by volunteer Master Naturalists, Coastal Naturalists, and others.

TXDOT has now installed an aerodynamic barrier and flashing yellow lights to increase pelican survival.

# FAMILY & COMMUNITY HEALTH

By: Lilian Mezquida, CEA - Family & Community Health



## SET-UP SCALE DOWN



From October to December County Agent implemented several programs. The Set-Up Scale Down program with a total of 87 participants. Participants were offered weekly exercises and nutritional information. In addition, a Facebook group was created to create weekly challenges to provide incentives and friendly competitions, and recorded videos in case participants were unable to attend **LIVE** sessions. The program was offered in English and in Spanish to accommodate our resident population. The Step Up, Scale Down Winter League completed 2,321.65 miles through Walk Across Texas-Howdy Health.



## COOKING WELL WITH DIABETES

This program was implemented at Harlingen Salvation Army with 11 participants and Harlingen Cultural Arts with 12 participants. The participants said they would use healthier fats on their recipes, also they will improve sodium and fiber in their diet. 23 participants completed the cooking well with diabetes program.

We were able to offer **FREE** health screenings refer to data collection measurements to detect changes in body composition (weight, body mass index, waith to hip ratio) and cardiometabolic health (glucose, lipids (cholesterol), HgbA1c, blood pressure, restin heart rate.)



In total 15 participants completed the program.

Feedback from participants:

"Now every time I eat, I remember what I learned in class, and I try to count carbs, increased Fiber and avoid fats".

"Now when I go to any family reunion I take my own food, this will help me to control what I'm eating".





# AGRICULTURE

By: Marco Ponce, CEA - Agriculture

## 5 – HOUR CEU CONFERENCE



*Agriculture Agents from Cameron and Hidalgo Counties conducted a 5 – Hour Continuing Education Unit Training that was held at the District 12 AgriLife Extension Center in Weslaco. The training was conducted for local agriculture producers and for employees of various municipalities who were in need of CEU's.*



## RIO GRANDE VALLEY BULL GAIN TEST

*Rio Grande Valley Agriculture Agents kicked off the Bull Gain and Heifer Development Program at Rio Beef Feedyard. Cattle were initially sorted by breed and then by age for the performance test. Cattle that were brought in had an initial weight taken, a mid-point weight taken, and then a final weight to determine which bulls performed the best in terms of weight gain and other performance factors.*



## BAR B-QUE AND CEU'S PROGRAM

*Cameron County Agriculture Agent conducted an I.P.M. CEU program at Mid Valley Farms in La Feria. The program was offered during lunch while participants were also enjoying a BBQ meal provided by the farm. There were over 30 local producers and industry personnel that attended this program.*



## VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION LUNCHEON

*Cameron County Agents conducted a Volunteer Recognition Luncheon here at the Extension Office in San Benito. Agents were able to recognize their outstanding volunteers who each gave countless hours of support to all of our program areas this past year.*





# BETTER LIVING FOR TEXANS

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



## HEALTHY CARBOHYDRATES

The Better Living for Texans program began to implement a new 4 session nutrition program in Cameron County in collaboration with Santa Maria ISD and Brownsville ISD Parental and Family Engagement centers. The program focuses on learning how to make better carbohydrate choices and therefore prevent chronic disease. Nidia Garcia, Extension Agent - Better Living for Texans, implemented the program and had 43 graduates.

## GET THE FACTS

In collaboration with the Brownsville ISD Continuing Adult Education (ACE) program, 45 adults registered for the Get the Facts nutrition program. Esmeralda Avila, Nutrition Education Associate, led the 4-week program that focuses on the importance of reading and understanding the food nutrition label, fats, sodium, and sugars.

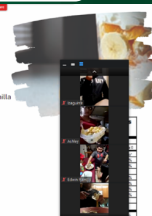


## A FRESH START TO A HEALTHIER YOU!

### Ensalada de Fruta Agradable

**Ingredientes**  
2 cucharadas de mezcla de pudín instantáneo, en azúcar, de sabor vainilla  
1 taza de yogur sin grasa, sabor vainilla  
1 lata de 15 onzas de piña en pedazos, en jugo, escurrido  
1 lata de 11 onzas de mandarina, en jugo, escurrido  
1 taza de uvas  
2 plátanos medianos, rebanados

**Preparación**  
1. Lávase las manos y limpie su área para cocinar.  
2. Limpie la parte de arriba de la lata de antes abrir.  
3. Combine la mezcla de pudín y el yogur en un tazón mediano.  
4. Mezcle toda la fruta con el pudín y yogur.  
5. Ponga la mezcla en el refrigerador y cuando esté fría, sírvela.



The nutrition program was conducted both virtual and in-person. A total of 22 adults graduated the nutrition program in November. Adults who participated learned about the importance of increasing physical activity, increasing fruit and vegetable intake, and preparing low-cost nutritious recipes.

## YOUTH NUTRITION PROGRAMS

### A GUIDE TO HEALTHY SNACKS

One-shot presentation for parents and students of IDEA-Harlingen. Nidia Garcia, Extension Agent - BLT, conducted the presentation for 11 adults and 13 elementary schoolers. The session highlighted the importance of eating healthy snacks and had a Fruit Pizza snack recipe demonstration.



### CHOOSE HEALTHY

Nutrition program for middle-school aged children conducted at the La Paloma Park and IDEA-Harlingen. Students learned about making healthy food and beverage choices. Each of the 18 students enrolled in the program received a Choose Healthy booklet along with educational reinforcement items and tasted easy and nutritious food recipes.

## GROWING & NOURISHING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

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



THE BLT GNHC program held face to face programming at Perez Elementary and Breeden Elementary in Brownsville during the months of October, November and December. Perez Elementary School installed 2 raised bed gardens and planted kale, brussels sprouts, swiss chard and other herbs. Breeden Elementary planted container gardens with herbs. At Rodriguez Elementary in Harlingen 30 2nd graders are participating in Learn, Grow, Eat & Go! and have planted and already harvested Kale, salad greens and carrots.



### 2ND GRADERS AT RODRIGUEZ ELEMENTARY IN HARLINGEN PLANT CABBAGE, KALE, AND SALAD GREENS.





# COOPERATIVE EXTENSION FAMILY & COMMUNITY HEALTH

By: Gloria Carter, CEP- Family & Community Health



## CHOOSE HEALTH: FOOD, FUN & FITNESS



*FCH Agent, Gloria Carter conducted in-person nutrition and cooking lessons from the Choose Health: Food Fun and Fitness curriculum which focus on nutritional lessons, food demonstrations, to 30 students and parents from Frank Roberts Elementary and the Harlingen CISD ACE Program during the months of October and November.*

*Balanced Living” wellness curriculum, authored by the University of Idaho Extension, is designed for busy- adults and teaches a range of skills for balanced living was facilitated for the Harlingen CISD coordinators as part of their December professional development. Participants gained knowledge and skills for managing time and stress, eating mindfully, getting enough exercise, and sleeping well.*

## BALANCED LIVING



## COUPONING 101

*34 participants from the Proyecto Juan Diego program in Brownsville attended the Couponing 101 virtual classes in the month of November. Participants learned how to use paper and digital coupons to help stretch their family’s budget.*





# EXPANDED FOOD AND NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM (EFNEP)

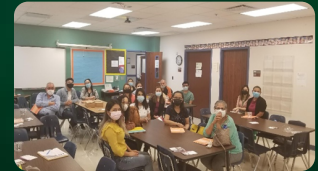
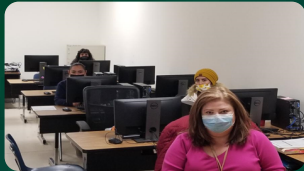
By: Beatriz Loya, EFNEP Agent



**SUPPORTING TEXAS FAMILIES WITH GREATEST NEED SINCE 1969**



*The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) helps young families and youth with limited resources—those most at risk to suffer from hunger, food insecurity, and the inability to connect with available support systems. EFNEP offers practical lessons in basic nutrition, food preparation, food budget management, and food safety in settings convenient for the participants. Program graduates reflect significant, lasting improvement in eating behaviors and healthy food habits. Texas has a need for EFNEP—2019 data show that 16 percent of Texas families with children under the age of 18 were living below poverty level, compared to 14 percent of U.S. families.*



## EFNEP REACHES DIVERSE AUDIENCES

*In Texas, ethnically diverse EFNEP nutrition assistants reach youth and adult groups whose principal language may be English or Spanish. During the last Quarter of 2021:*

- 284 families enrolled in EFNEP
- 0 youth contacts were made through the EFNEP youth program
- 100% of EFNEP participants have children under the age of 19
- 66% of families were at or below 100% of federal poverty level
- 70% of families enrolled in one or more food assistance



## COST-BENEFIT OF EFNEP

*Studies have shown that for every \$1 spent on EFNEP, \$10 were estimated to be saved in health care costs and \$2 saved in food costs by participants. For Texas, this is \$43 million in estimated health care cost savings and almost \$8.6 million in food costs.*



## EFNEP MAKES A REAL DIFFERENCE

### Adult Program

*Using hands-on experiences, EFNEP adult participants complete at least a six-lesson series on stretching food dollars, improving eating habits, and practicing food safety principles. As a result of participation in EFNEP, participants will learn to prepare more meals and snacks at home, be more active, control portion size, and have more energy.*

### Youth Program

*The EFNEP Youth program is directed toward low-income school-age youth. These students participate in a series of fun and educational lessons on good nutrition and food safety as part of summer programs and classroom and after-school activities. Through fun and engaging activities, youth learn to build a healthy plate, set limits on sugar, fats, and sodium, be active, food safety, and to practice healthy behaviors.*



## VOLUNTEERS STRENGTHEN EFNEP

*In 2021, 20 volunteers donated 209 hours of work to EFNEP in Texas. At the Texas rate of \$26.43/hr, this volunteerism has a minimum dollar value of \$5,523. Volunteers make a difference in their own communities and contribute to EFNEP's continued success.*



# 4-H & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

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



## ONE DAY 4-H COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT

*Cameron County 4-H helped set up the pumpkin patch at First United Methodist Church in Harlingen, TX. We had 15 members come out and volunteer and we were able to give back to our community for this state wide community service day.*



## THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY HELP

*Cameron County 4-H was able to donate 20 thanksgiving meals to families in need within the Harlingen School District. We partnered with the Parental Involvement Center where they were able to identify those families in need of Thanksgiving meals and Texas Farm Bureau assisted with the purchase of the turkeys.*



## CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY HELP



*Cameron County 4-H donated items to the community service event hosted by the RGV Credit Union "Gifts for Teens". We were able to donate a variety of items for foster teens in the Cameron County community.*

## CITRUS & VEGETABLE SHOW



*This year we had some Cameron County 4-H members compete at the Citrus & Vegetable Show at the Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show grounds in Mercedes, TX. One of our members received the Sweepstakes Winner of the whole show and Reserve Champion with her red beets. We also had kids that competed in the Food Challenge contest where they placed 3rd place and we had a team compete in the Ag Product ID Contest.*

