

Cameron County Extension Newsletter

APRIL 2023 - JUNE 2023

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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CONTACT US: VISIT US AT:



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



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www.cameron.agrilife.org
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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

Analisa Sanchez

County Extension Agent
4-H & Youth Development

Gloria Carter

Cooperative Extension Agent
Family & Community Health

Stephanie Bowman

Cooperative Extension Agent
4-H & Youth Development

Beatriz Loya

Extension Agent- EFNEP

Nidia Garcia

Extension Agent- BLT

Kristina Loreda

Extension Agent- BLT

Miriam Rodriguez

Office Manager

Expanded Food And Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)

By: Beatriz Loya, Extension Agent- EFNEP



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—2022 data show that 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 MAKES A REAL DIFFERENCE

Adult Program

Using hands-on experiences, EFNEP adult participants complete 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.

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 2nd Quarter of 2023:

- **295** families enrolled in EFNEP;
- **131** participants graduated with **164** continuing in the program.
- **860** youth contacts were made through the EFNEP Youth program;
- **763** youth contacts graduated from the EFNEP Youth program;
- **100%** of EFNEP participants have children under the age of **19**;
- **93%** of the Adult participants showed improvement in one or more diet quality indicators; and
- **83%** of the Youth participants showed improvement in diet quality indicators



VOLUNTEERS STRENGTHEN EFNEP

During the 2nd Quarter of 2023, **122 volunteers** donated **1,628 hours** of work to EFNEP in Texas. At the Texas volunteer rate of **\$26.43/hr.**, this volunteerism has a minimum dollar value of **\$48,758.60**. Volunteers make a difference in their own communities and contribute to EFNEP's continued success.

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.

Cooperative Extension Program Family & Community Health

By: Gloria Carter, EA- Family & Community Health



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

Cooperative Extension Program



Heroes 4 Health

The Kids in the Kitchen program was implemented at Bonham Elementary School ACE Summer program. Over 30 Youth participants participated in hands-on healthy recipe preparations. This program addresses the issue of childhood obesity in Cameron County.



City of La Feria Recreation Center

The Eat Smart, Live Strong nutrition program for older adults was held in collaboration with the Tu Salud Si Cuenta program during April and May. Eat Smart, Live Strong is designed to improve fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity among able-bodied 60-74-year-olds. Over 20 participants attended the 4-week sessions.

Cano Health (Brownsville & Harlingen)

During April, May, and June, topics on healthy aging were presented to the patients at Cano Health Brownsville and Harlingen locations. Issues addressed included: fall prevention, shingles, depression and isolation, and heat stroke/heat exhaustion prevention.



Family & Community Health

By: Lilian Mezquida, CEA - Family & Community Health

Dinner Tonight Mother's Day- On May 12, 2023, we celebrated Mother's day. We had different vendors such as **Cameron County Public Health, Buckner, Superior, and others.** We also had our star chefs **Judge Eddie Trevino** and **Commissioner Sofia Benavides.** A total of **85 people** attended our event.

Future Programs

- **August:** Cooking Well with Diabetes at Los Fresnos.
- **September:** Cooking Well with High Blood Pressure and Strong People Strong Bodies.
- **November:** Diabetes Conference



*Grape Tomato & Cilantro
Salad*



*Banana Chocolate
Pudding Recipe*



*Mother's Day
Dinner Tonight Event*



**Bob Clark Social Services
Brownsville**



**Perez Elementary
School Brownsville**



**Extension Office San
Benito**

Strong People Strong Bodies- This program included progressive resistance training, balance training and flexibility exercises. Participants met **twice weekly for 24 weeks.**



Graduates at Cunningham Manor Apartments

The Fresh Start to a Healthier You! nutrition program promotes healthy living by teaching about nutritious meals and snacks, food safety, saving money on food, and increasing daily physical activity. From April to June **40 adults** completed the **4-session series**.

Healthy Carbohydrates is a **4-session series** that focuses on healthy types and portions of carbohydrates to help reduce chronic disease risk. Through engaging activities, participants learn about creating a healthy plate, carbohydrate counting, and physical activity. **15 Adults** completed the **4-week nutrition program**.



Kindergarten students at Lamar Elementary Dual Language Academy

Early Childhood Learn, Grow, Eat & Go (LGEG) for Pre-Kinder and Kindergarten students that teaches plant and gardening skills, food exposure, brain- and body-boosting physical activities, and includes parental engagement. This is a **four-week multi-session series** that was implemented in June in collaboration with the Harlingen ISD Multilingual Department. Planning and implementation was a group effort with **Nidia Garcia, Extension Agent - Better Living for Texans, Gloria Carter, FCH CEP Prairie View A&M Agent and Kristina Loredo, Extension Agent - Better Living for Texans**. A total of **90 pre-k and kinder students** enrolled in the program at Lamar Elementary Dual Language Academy in Harlingen.

Growing & Nourishing Healthy Communities

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

The Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities Program (GNHC) was held at several locations through out Cameron County for the months of April, May, and June. In April and May, the GNHC program was held at the Brownsville Wellness Center where **25 participants**, Brownsville ISD employees, participated in the gardening program. Each participant donated their own native plants that could attract pollinators to be planted near and around the **3 raised bed** gardens full of tomatoes, squash, eggplant, peppers, and herbs. Their garden continues to flourish and generate many harvests. **Better Living for Texans agents** also attended the **District 12** Program Planning Conference held in San Antonio. In June, **Early Childhood Learn, Grow, Eat, and Go!** was held at Lamar Elementary for the Multi Language Department of Harlingen ISD for about **90 4-6 year olds**. Better Living for Texans Agent Nidia Garcia and Prairie View A&M CEP Agent Gloria Carter implemented the successful program for the month of June.



Agriculture & Natural Resources

By: Marco Ponce, CEA - Agriculture & Natural Resources

Planting Grain Sorghum Demonstration Plot- Agent secured a cooperator and planted a grain sorghum result demonstration plot. This research plot consisted of **8 varieties** that were planted on **six rows**. This plot was also replicated **three times** in order to ensure the accuracy of the data being collected. Each variety will be harvested separately, and samples will be collected in order to measure yield, bushel weight, and moisture content.



Advanced Ranch Management Program- Agents planned and implemented the second part of this four part educational series. This session was conducted at the HEB Meats Department where participants were able to take part in a behind the scenes tour of their meat department. Participants learned about the different types of meat and about the factors that go into quality grading. Participants were also able to hear presentations from their regional supervisors on how they manage their meat department.

Cotton and Grain Scouting School- Agent assisted with a Cotton and Grain Scouting School educational program that was designed to educate participants on the different types of pests that are affecting the cotton and grain crops. Participants were also educated on the different types of diseases that are also affecting these crops. Participants then learned about the different control methods that are available for certain pests and diseases.



Coastal & Marine Resources

By: Tony Reisinger, CEA -Coastal & Marine Resources



The summer **Sargassum seaweed** threat to **South Padre Island** did not materialize and the moderate amount washing ashore was beneficial for beach building. This concentration quickly degraded and was incorporated into the beach berm. Much of the resulting material is the beginning of marine food chain, feeding tiny animals living in the sands of the swash zone, eventually resulting in an increase in coastal fisheries production.



4-H Marine Field Day on June 17 included lessons on: the importance of sand dunes for protecting our coast, beach seining to learn what fish inhabit the surf zone, and how to escape a rip current.



Texas Master Naturalist- Graduated **48 Texas Master Naturalists** in April from our two chapters, Rio Grande Valley Chapter and South Texas Border Chapter. These chapters contribute ~\$.5 million in volunteer time annually!



Juntos- 4-H participants at **Berta Cabaza Middle School** hosted two family nights, families learned hoe to connect and how they can continue to work toward educational and career goals. **Megan Rodriguez**, Community and Economic Development Extension Agent, spoke to families about entrepreneurship as a potential career path(**15 participants**). Families met to discuss future Juntos events and receive updates on student success coaching (**17 participants**). **Juntos 4-H youth participated** in an educational field trip to **Isla Blanca Park in South Padre Island (19 participants)**. **CEA- Coastal & Marine Resources, Tony Reisinger**, led tour of the UTRGV Coastal Studies Lab, taught students how to use seining nets, and spoke to them about career opportunities in Marine Science.



CEP 4-H Engagement- 8 CEP 4-H youth from **Harmony School of Innovation** 4-H Club attended **Texas 4-H Roundup** to compete in both qualifying and invitational contests such as **Educational Presentations, Talent Showcase, Healthy Lifestyles and Science Fair**. In addition, 4-H member **Angela Osorio** placed **3rd** in her category in the **Texas 4-H Fashion Storyboard Contest**.



Heroes 4-Health- a nutrition series was implemented at **IDEA Academy-San Benito** and **Dr. Cash Elementary School** during the spring semester (**35 youth**) and at **IDEA Academy-Brownsville** and **Brownsville Parks & Recreation Summer Camp** during June (**40 youth**). In addition, **11 youth** ambassadors from **Porter High School** continued the program through the end of the school year.



Horticulture

By: Jennifer Herrera, CEA - Horticulture



Earth-Kind- The Master Gardeners and I participated in **3 Earth Day** events and manned **8 booths** reaching over **500 participants**. We also provided **7 presentations** on container gardening, native plants, butterfly gardening, herb gardening, composting and more reaching **150 participants**.



Master Gardener Volunteers, Spring Plant Sale: The Master Gardeners hosted their **biannual plants sale**. We had over **500 participants** in attendance. Master Gardeners provided educational presentations on composting, container gardening, grape growing, herb gardening and butterfly gardening.



RGV Small Acreage- Grape and Wine Series **Session 3: Wine Faults 46 Participants**. Participants learned about sensory associated characteristics of a wine that is unpleasant due to heat damage, oxidation this includes taste, smell and appearance.



Master Gardener Training- We had **14 interns** attend that following classes soils, citrus, cut flowers, and vegetable gardening. Master Gardener interns will now be working towards completing their **50 hours of volunteer service** to graduate and become certified as **Texas Master Gardeners** in September.

