



# EXTENSION CONNECTION

HIDALGO COUNTY  
JANUARY - MARCH 2022

## WHAT WE DO

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is a unique education agency that provides research based community education, 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.

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- A Note from the Extension Team.....2
- Family & Community Health.....3
- Agriculture & Natural Resources.....4
- 4-H & Youth Development.....4
- Horticulture.....5
- Expanded Food & Nutrition Edu.Program.....5
- Extension State Program Highlights.....6
- Prairie View A&M Coop. Extension.....6
- County Supported Staff Programs.....7

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 @HidalgoAgrilifeExtension

## EXTENSION FACULTY



**Dr. Andréa A. Valdez**

County Extension Agent- Family & Community Health  
Extension County Administrator

# Vidal Saenz

*County Extension Agent- Agriculture & Natural Resources*

## Joanne Ureste-Armijo

**County Extension Agent- Family & Community Health**

# Ashley Gregory

County Extension Agent- Horticulture

## Katarina Rodriguez

County Extension Agent-4-H & Youth Development

## Melissa De Leon

## Extension Agent

*Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program*

**Andrea Torres-Barragan & Karen Cantu**

## Extension Agents

**Better Living for Texans Program**



## Rina Castillo

Cooperative Extension Agent-Prairie View A&M  
Community Economic Development

## A NOTE FROM EXTENSION:

As we move into a busy year, we are working on adapting to a new normal and new programs. Our Hidalgo County programs are kicking off with new educational programs such as Strong People, Strong Bodies; Stress Less with Mindfulness; Spring Gardening Workshops, and a full 4-H show season! Please contact our office and follow us on social media to learn more!

## FOLLOW OR SUBSCRIBE



<http://hidalgo.agrilife.org>



@hidalgoagriflifeextension



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension  
Hidalgo County

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT OF THE QUARTER

County Extension Agent: Joanne Ureste-Armijo

Strong People, Strong Bodies is a community-based strength training program aimed at mid-life and older individuals. The benefits of strength training for older individuals have been studied extensively and include:

- Increased muscle mass and strength
- Improved bone density and reduced risk for osteoporosis and related fractures
- Reduced risk for diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, depression, and obesity
- Improved self-confidence, sleep and vitality



**Call us to  
learn more  
or ask us  
how you  
can join!**







## Dr. Andréa A. Valdez, M.P.H. Family & Community Health

@AgrilifeExtensionHidalgoFCH  



**200+**  
ATTENDEES

We partnered with Hidalgo County Judge Richard Cortez's office to host the first ever Paws at the Park event! Humans and dogs alike loved our tasty granola bars and banana muffins while they learned about all the programs Extension has to offer. A dog walk, picture contest, photo booths, free vaccines, and some doggy playtime made this a must attend fun time!



As part of the Dinner Tonight Healthy Cooking School, Dr. Andrea Valdez creates content for widespread social media. The February week of content recipe is for all those chocolate lovers- a **Chocolate Mug Cake!** Just mix ingredients in your favorite coffee mug, pop it in the microwave and it is ready for you! You can also tailor this recipe with your favorite nuts or berries. Find this recipe at [dinnertonight.tamu.edu](http://dinnertonight.tamu.edu)



## Joanne Ureste-Armijo, M.S. Family & Community Health

@AgrilifeExtensionFamilyResourcesHidalgoCounty 

**Strong People, Strong Bodies** is a NEW 24 week class designed for mid-life or older adults that includes progressive resistance training and flexibility exercises. Community partners, McAllen ISD and Mission CISD Parental Involvement Departments participants are all taking advantage of this amazing program!

*"It is important for me to stay physically fit to keep up with my grandchildren."*



The Master Clothing Volunteers (MCVs) assisted with the Paws at the Park event by constructing **300** dog bandanas. The MCVs also made **120** reading pillows which were donated to Edinburg Children's Hospital along with a book donated by the Edinburg Retired Teacher Association.





## Vidal Saenz, M.S. Agriculture & Natural Resources

### 28th Annual Cotton & Grain Pre-Plant Conference

**110** producers earned Continuing Education Units at this annual conference. Participants were treated to door prizes by sponsors. Topics included Bool Weevil eradication, cotton stalk management and cotton seeding rates.

### 2022 Sunflower, Grain Sorghum and Cotton Variety Trials

The 2022 Sunflower Trials were planted in McCook with cooperator Mike Hudsonpillar. **11** varieties of sunflowers were planted and replicated 3 times. The Grain Sorghum trials with **6** varieties of sorghum were planted in Hargill with cooperator Tom Kotzur. The Cotton variety trial was planted in Mercedes with Chuck McCutcheon where **10** varieties were planted. All trials will be checked for yields.

### RGV Bull Gain Test & Heifer Development Program

**27** consignors participated in this program this year with 74 bulls and 22 heifers in the test. The results of this test will be presented at the Cattle Production Workshop in April 2022.

### RGV Beef 706 Program

This 3-part series of hands-on sessions kicked off with the first session focusing on factors that effecting feeder calf value and prices. **40** people participated in a mock auction where Extension Livestock Specialist, Dr. Joe Paschal explained the qualities of each calf.



## Kathy Rodriguez, M.S. 4-H & Youth Development

@HidalgoCounty4H



## SPRINGING INTO THE SEASON



A new year brings a new show season and the Hidalgo County 4-H program was there to represent!

- **7** Showmanship Champions
- **19** Grand Champions
- **74** Champs for Champions totaling **\$110,000**
- **108** RGVLS Gala projects totaling **\$128,000**
- **314** exhibitors made the sale totaling **\$207,100**



### 4-H Rally in Hidalgo County

**101**  
4-HER'S  
ENTRIES

4-H Rally is a 2 day event hosting the Photography, Fashion Sensation, Duds to Dazzle Contest, Round-Up (Educational Presentation, Share-the-Fun, & Public Speaking) contests.



### 4-H Free Little Library

Our 4-H County Council and Ambassadors worked together with **Hidalgo County Precinct 4 Commissioner Ellie Torres** to build a Free Little Library for the Linn-San Manuel Veterans Memorial Park to be installed next quarter.





Ashley Gregory, M.S.  
Horticulture

## Boys & Girls Club of San Juan Youth Gardening Workshop

The Hidalgo County Master Gardeners partnered with the Better Living for Texans program to host a 2 day **Youth Gardening Workshop** over Spring Break at the Boys & Girls Club of San Juan. The youth learned what seeds need to grow and planted seeds to take home. The older youth did a garden bug hunt and learned how to plant seeds with square foot gardening!

**45**  
YOUTH  
GARDENERS

## Master Gardeners

**75**

PARTICIPANTS IN  
GARDENING 101 & 3  
EDUCATIONAL  
WORKSHOPS

The Hidalgo County Master Gardeners welcomed **15** new interns into the Volunteer Training Program this quarter. The Horticulture Committee hosted the **Advanced Tree Care Training** where **13** participants learned from certified Arborists from around the State on in depth proper tree care and maintenance. With only 3 certified arborists across the RGV, this training provided invaluable skills to the Hidalgo community!



Melissa De Leon, M.S.  
Expanded Food &  
Nutrition Program (EFNEP)

@HidalgoCountyExpandedFoodandNutritionEducationProgram



The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) in Hidalgo County helps families and youths with limited resources – those most at risk who suffer from hunger, food insecurity and the inability to connect with available support systems. EFNEP offers practical lessons in:

- Building a Healthy Plate
- Keeping Food Safe
- Meal Planning
- Shop on a Budget
- Being Active
- Encouraging Family Mealtime at Home



**291 Adult Enrollment**

**156 Adult Graduates**

**8,483 Youth Enrollment**

**7,551 Youth Graduates**

**Nutrition! Food Prep! Food Budget Management! Food Safety!**





# Better Living for Texans Program



Andrea Torres-Barragan, Ph.D.



Karen Cantu, B.S.

Ricardo Carranza & Roy Custodio, Program Assistants



## Gardening

The gardens are blooming this Spring with both youth and adults getting their hands in the dirt! The adult gardening class has **60** participants and **1,500 seedlings** are being grown in the greenhouse to distribute to **12** community and school gardens. Last fall, **1,600 pounds of produce** were harvested from 7 gardens and the **Progreso Community Garden** won the Fall Harvest Challenge by harvesting **478 pounds of produce!**

## Nutrition

BLT nutrition programs partnered with multiple schools to teach curricula such as **Get the Facts, A Fresh Start to a Healthier You**, and **Healthy Carbohydrates** around the county. From **Las Palmas Community Center** and **Edcouch-Elsa ISD** to **Mission CISD**, **La Joya ISD**, **Progreso ISD** and **Edinburg CISD**, all adults and youth learned how to incorporate more fruits and vegetables into their daily diet!

# 105

PROGRAM GRADUATES



Rina Castillo, M.P.A.  
**Community  
Economic Development**



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

Cooperative Extension Program

## Get HUB Certified!

**42 participants** learned about the State HUB (Historically Underutilized Business) certification program. The HUB Program facilitates state procurement of products and services from minority and women-owned businesses. In partnership with UTRGV, this free certification allows members to have access to guidelines and advice for navigating opportunities and bidding processes.

## How to Start a

## Business Workshop

In collaboration with the Alamo Chamber of Commerce, Prairie View A&M University Cooperative Extension presented this workshop to **18 participants**. This workshop covered important tools and resources a business owner may need to establish a solid foundation during its early formative years. The topics of this workshop included: Personal Traits of an Entrepreneur; Marketing Analysis; Legal Structure; Business Banking and Accounting Basics.

## Grow Your Farm Workshop

An interactive workshop to help **22 prospective small farm entrepreneurs** start down the path to successful business ownership was hosted by the RGV Small Acreage program. Prairie View A&M CEP presented information on **business planning, agribusiness marketing, farm food safety, and USDA-FSA Farm Loan resources.**



# Hidalgo County Supported Staff



**Elzie Martinez, B.S.**

Program Assistant-  
Family & Consumer Sciences

## Community Programs

# 515

**PROGRAM  
PARTICIPANTS**

Our Family & Community Health Community Programs had multiple partnerships this quarter utilizing our many program topics such as **Budgeting, Medication Management, Goal Setting, and Women's Health.** Our partners included *Proyecto Desarrollo Humano, Alton Senior Citizen Center, La Joya ISD, Mission CISD, McAllen ISD, Edinburg CISD, Donna ISD and ARISE Las Milpas.*



**Linda Ramirez**

Program Coordinator

The Families Reading Every Day (FRED) program aims to encourage literacy and reading as a family to Hidalgo County citizens. Our partners for this quarter included: **Mercedes Housing Authority, Region 1 at Elsa High School, Cielito Lindo Adult Day Care (56 Sun Safety and Living Well program participants), Weslaco Longoria Apartments (24 Women's Health program participants), and Pharr Community Center (33 Women's Health Program graduates).**

# 148

**FRED  
GRADUATES**



## Hidalgo County Support Staff



Elena Almendarez,  
Administrative Assistant II  
Luz Sena,  
Administrative Assistant I  
(L-R)

# 218

**Office Visitors**

