



EXTENSION CONNECTION

HIDALGO COUNTY
OCTOBER - DECEMBER 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.

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 @HidalgoAgrilifeExtension

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Better Living for Texans Program



PRAIRIE VIEW
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AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Cooperative Extension Program

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Community Economic Development

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Hidalgo County

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PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT OF THE QUARTER

Hidalgo County Master Gardener Program
County Extension Agent: Ashley Gregory

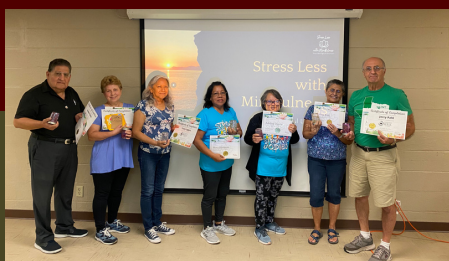
The Hidalgo County Master Gardener program has been a staple Extension program in Hidalgo County for many years. There are currently 80 Master Gardeners in Hidalgo County that teach the community on multiple gardening topics such as rainwater harvesting, composting, and vegetable gardening! In 2022, the Master Gardeners volunteered 3,295 hours valued at \$89,624! They have completed 2022 with 32 workshops and events with over 600 participants. Our Master Gardeners work rain or shine to upkeep their Educational Garden in Precinct 2 to provide a peaceful and beautiful experience to all that visit the garden. Ashley Gregory, County Extension Agent-Horticulture, manages and guides the Master Gardeners through their training, internship, and volunteer hours with her expertise and dedication to the program.



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

@AgrilifeExtensionHidalgoFCH

After finishing their Strong People, Strong Bodies course, there participants wanted more! **8 graduates participated in a Cooking Well with Diabetes and Stress Less with Mindfulness class.** For their graduation gift, they made glitter jars to help them in difficult moments return to a calmer breath.



This quarter, Dr. Valdez filmed some spooky but healthy treats with **Judge Richard Cortez** for a Halloween video.

District 12 welcomed **Hidalgo County Commissioner for Precinct 2 Eddie Cantu** to the Continuing Education Conference in Laredo. In preparation for the upcoming legislative session, Dr. Ruben Saldana and Dr. Valdez visited with **State Representative Terry Canales (pictured), Senator Chuy Hinojosa, Representatives Bobby Guerra and Armando Martinez, and the offices of Representatives Sergio Munoz and Oscar Longoria** to brief them on Texas A&M AgriLife exceptional items and how we are educating the public in Hidalgo County.



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

@AgrilifeExtensionFamilyResourcesHidalgoCounty

Research states that physical activity can contribute to maintaining quality of life, health, and reducing falls in older adults (Gillespie, et al. 2012). The **Step Up, Scale Down** program provides tailorable chair exercises for adults which aid in maintaining a healthy weight and improving their overall health. Community members at **Las Palmas Community Center in McAllen** reported losing weight during this 12 week program.



The Master Clothing Volunteers (MCVs) participated in a craft fair at Firemen's Park in McAllen selling their homemade craft pieces. **Each vendor raised \$160-\$320.** The MCV's also completed **100 neck pillows for their Veteran's Day Community Service Project.** The neck pillows were donated to the American Legion during their Veteran's Day brunch.



Vidal Saenz, M.S. Agriculture & Natural Resources

25th Annual RGV Bull Gain Test and Heifer Development Program

October marked the beginning of the 25th Annual Bull gain Test. 80 bulls and 20 heifers consigned to the gain test this year from 27 consignors. Bulls will be measured for performance next year. This testing helps ranchers identify their top performing bulls that will help them market their bulls to other ranchers.

Texas Watermelon Conference

The Texas Watermelon Conference was held in McAllen this year. **35 producers** earned 3 hours worth of CEU's to enhance their pesticide applicator licenses.

CEU Workshop

A 5 hour CEU Workshop was held in Weslaco in November. A full house of **80** growers, aerial applicators and non-commercial license holders from drainage districts, cities and county participants learned about the safe use of pesticides.

Sausage Making Workshop

RGV County Extension Agriculture Agents provided a sausage making workshop in Linn, Texas in December. **25 program participants** learned about food safety, cooking times, grinding and mixing meats and sausage stuffing.



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

@HidalgoCounty4H



One Day 4-H Community Service Day Kindness Rocks!

Our 4-H County Council led a countywide "**Kindness Rocks!**" community service project in which clubs hand painted beautiful and kind message on rocks that were later left in local community parks as part of One Day 4-H. One Day 4-H is a statewide effort of community service. Studies show that simply witnessing acts of kindness can have positive side effects. The 4-H Kindness rocks display messages such as "Choose Kindness" and "You can do it!".



1,018 total students and **74** teachers from Hidalgo County learned more about agriculture at the Kids, Kows and More symposium!

Kids, Kows, & More (Path to the Plate Youth Expo)

Veteran's Day Community Service

Town and Country 4-H visited with local veterans to provide them with inspiring and thankful messages for their service.





Ashley Gregory, M.S.
Horticulture

Master Gardener Graduates

The Hidalgo County Master Gardeners hosted their Fall Plant sale that raised over \$4000 for continued educational programs in Hidalgo County! The most popular workshop this quarter was on Tree Care with over **50 participants**! We also welcomed **10 new Master Gardeners** to the Hidalgo County Master Gardener Association! Over 40 Master Gardeners and their families were recognized for their dedication and hard work at the Annual Volunteer Recognition and Holiday party.



The Hidalgo County Master Gardeners hosted an Earth Kind Roses workshop teaching over **40 participants** how to grow the most beautiful roses!



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
- Eating the right number of calories
- Setting Limits
- Keeping Food Safe
- Being Active
- Encouraging Family Mealtime at Home

243 Adult Enrollment
77 Adult Graduates

28 Youth Enrollment



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

This quarter sprouted **4 more community gardens and 4 more school gardens for a total of 14 community gardens and 8 school gardens in Hidalgo County!** A total of **475 youth** participated in the school and early childhood gardening programs and **85 people** graduated from the Growing & Nourishing Healthy Communities adult gardening program.

Nutrition & Activity

BLT nutrition programs partnered with ARISE Las Milpas, AP Solis Middle School, Mission CISD, Progreso ISD, and Edinburg CISD CATS Center to teach curricula such as ***Get the Facts, A Fresh Start to a Healthier You, Healthy Carbohydrates and the Walk N Talk program!*** All these programs graduated **58 participants with 2,076.2 miles walked!**



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



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Cooperative Extension Program

Entrepreneurship

In collaboration with Hidalgo County Precinct 3, the Women in Ag Conference and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, multiple



workshops on "How to Start a Business" were held in Mission and Weslaco, respectively. These workshops reviewed important tools and resources business owners need

to establish a solid foundation during the early formative years, including marketing analysis, legal structure, and business banking.

Youth Pitch Contest

The Youth Pitch Contest helped 127 students participate in a business planning program that consisted of 14 sessions on how to start and run a business. At the end of the program, they all had an opportunity to compete in the pitch contest. Winners received laptops, headphones & speakers sponsored by AT&T.



Homeowner Assistance

The Homeowner Assistance Reimbursement Program (HARP) from the General Land Office helps homeowners affected by Hurricane Harvey repair and rebuild their homes. Information session for this program were held in Elsa, Edcouch & La Villa for 72 participants.

