

EXTENSION CONNECTION

HIDALGO COUNTY
JANUARY - MARCH 2024

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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Better Living for Texans Program



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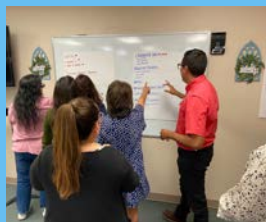


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Introducing



Olivia Galvan
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Program Assistant



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT OF THE QUARTER

Texas Communities Futures Forum

April 2024

The Texas Communities Futures Forum (TCFF) is held every 5 years to identify community needs that will guide Extension programming. The Extension service uses this issue ID process to identify any new community needs and adjust programming where needed. This year, the Hidalgo County Extension office and the Leadership Advisory Board planned, marketed, and implemented the TCFF event where stakeholders from all program areas met to brainstorm and prioritize educational needs in Hidalgo County. The Extension agents would like to thank Calvary Baptist Church in McAllen for hosting this event and City of McAllen's Commissioner Joaquin Zamora and Commissioner Sebi Haddad for providing the welcoming words!



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Healthy South Texas



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

@AgrilifeExtensionHidalgoFCH

For February's Heart Health month, Cooking Well for Healthy Blood Pressure was the program of choice! Employees from Emerson Tool Company and participants at the McAllen Public Library learned how to adjust recipes for a healthier blood pressure. Dr. Valdez presented a heart friendly recipe at the Heart Health Conference held at McAllen Public Library. The new Cooking Well with Friends program was a hit with 12 participants learning how helpful and healthy prepping meals can be!



Dr. Valdez was thrilled to be accepted into the Culinary Medicine for Food professionals program to learn benefits and recipe modifications of the Mediterranean Diet and bring new knowledge and programs to Hidalgo County.



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

@AgrilifeExtensionFamilyResourcesHidalgoCounty

On February 17, 2024, the Hidalgo County 4-H Program hosted a successful Heat Strong Conference at the McAllen Public Library which featured a vibrant opening health fair with 13 vendors offering free screenings and resources, and was attended by 120 participants who then enjoyed an educational program including a mindful breathing session, Q&A with a primary doctor, healthy heart cooking demonstration by Dr. Andrea Valdez, and presentation by a renowned cardiologist, while agents from neighboring counties provided invaluable support and door prizes from a generous sponsor were distributed, empowering attendees to make heart healthy choices.



Our Strong People, Strong Bodies program launched in February with a bang! Participants have already completed two monthly fitness tests, and we're seeing exciting improvements from individuals.



Vidal Saenz, M.S. Agriculture & Natural Resources

30th Annual RGV Cotton and Grain Pre-Plant Conference

The RGV Cotton and Grain Pre-Plant Conference was held for 84 program participants at Rio Farms. Several topics on cotton and grain production were presented along with cotton and grain market outlooks. 18 local business sponsored the event and raised \$5,200 to provide lunch and door prizes.

26th Annual RGV BIA Bull Gain Test and Heifer Development Program

The RGV County Extension Agents assisted in sonogramming bulls and heifers for ribeye area, scrotal circumference, hip height and weight in February. This information was given to the consignors to see how their livestock performed in hopes of them making better informed decisions and the marketing of their livestock.

Hidalgo County Crop Variety Trials

Three (3) plant cop variety trials were done in February and March. A sunflower variety trial was planted in McCook, Texas. A grain sorghum variety trials was planted in Monte Alto, Texas and a cotton variety trial was planted in Mercedes, Texas. The results of these trials will be provided to farmers by email, social media, and publications so that they can make more informed decisions about planting the following year's crop.



4-H & Youth Development

@HidalgoCounty4H 



Hidalgo County 4-H-The Place to Be!

This quarter, our Hidalgo County 4-H members competed at multiple District 12 competitions including Fashion Show and Educational Presentations. 4-H members also came together to present their community service project of Blessing Bags to the Edinburg Fire Department to deliver to those in need. Thank you Edinburg FD for accepting this donation and showing us the beautiful fire trucks!

Our Hidalgo County 4-H County Council officers helped Murdoch's open their store in Mission! They greeted customers and handed out buckets to welcome everyone to the store!





Ashley Gregory, M.S. Horticulture

Spring is Blooming!

The Hidalgo County 4-H Horticulture Program had a very productive start to the year with **seven (7) educational workshops** hosted in collaboration with the Hidalgo County Master Gardeners. Master Gardeners also held an informational booth at the annual RGV Home and Garden Show for three days, and the online Texas Gardening 101 course saw thirteen (**13**) participants from Hidalgo County join in February. Additionally, a "Gear Up for Spring" event was hosted with a local horticulture supply store in January.

RGV Small Acreage Program facilitated three more workshops covering topics like herb production and eco-tourism for the RGV, while spring gardening and the Home and Garden Show were promoted through two news interviews with local television stations.

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

449 Families Enrolled
93 Adult Graduates

3,880 Youth Contacts
2,980 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

This quarter sprouted the Gardening course at **6 locations (Arise Colonia Muñiz, Arise Las Milpas, Arise South Tower, Buckner Family Hope Center, Mercedes Community Garden and Johnny Economides High School)** with **93 graduates**. Two **(2) new gardens** were built with **249 elementary children** participating in Learn, Grow, Eat, Go!

Nutrition & Activity

BLT nutrition programs partnered with **Nikki Rowe High School** and **Achieve Early College of McAllen ISD, City of Elsa and La Estancia Apartments in Weslaco** with **30 participants** in the Walk N Talk program. **Bryan Elementary** graduated **22 participants** from the Get the Facts program and **Alton Recreation Center** where **16 participants graduated**.



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



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AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Cooperative Extension Program



Homebuilders Workshop: Navigating USDA Home Programs in Elsa TX.



Digital Literacy Workshop for small business owners

The workshop was designed to help entrepreneurs with skills and tools to implement digital literacy in their small business. Topics consisted of basics of digital literacy, how to do a google profile and buying and selling online. (25 attendees)



504 Home Repair grants were provided to the elderly at City of La Villa to repair, improve or modernize their homes to remove health and safety hazards. (6 participants: \$10,000 grant each)

