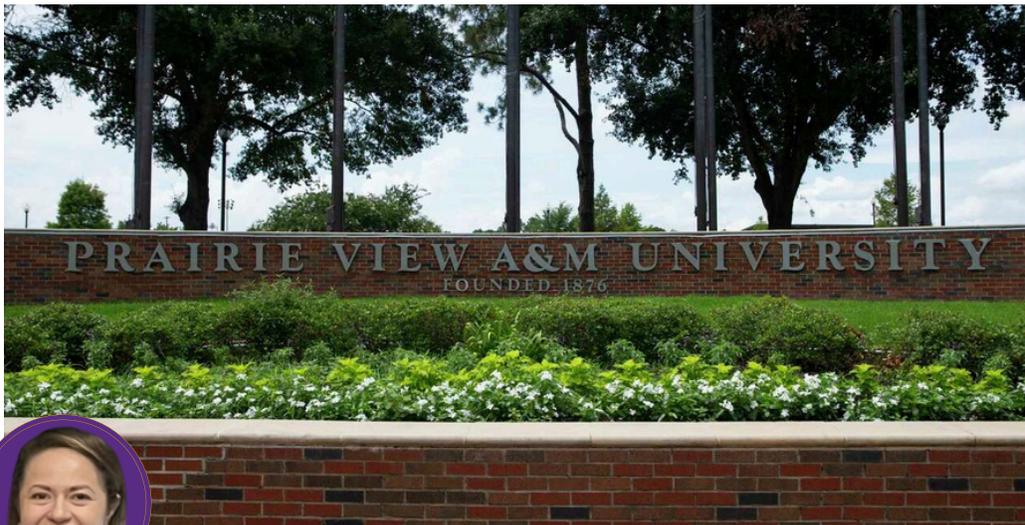


PVAMU EXTENSION

# CONNECTING HEALTH AND COMMUNITY



## Extension Agent Note

What a quarter it's been for Family & Community Health! This profession is incredibly rewarding. I've had the distinct pleasure of meeting so many of you at our various programs, and it's truly inspiring to witness your commitment to a healthier journey. Seeing you adapt recipes we've taught, and hearing how these behavior changes are positively impacting your health, reinforces the incredible work we do together.

Beyond our direct community engagement, this past quarter also offered valuable opportunities for professional growth. I had the privilege of attending a mental health conference through the Prairie View Cooperative Extension Program and look forward to implementing a conference in the upcoming year. I have been assisting with the TEAFCS State Conference in McAllen. I was deeply honored to receive five state awards. I firmly believe they are a testament to the wonderful work you do every day through your unwavering support and participation.

Looking ahead, I'm thrilled about the programs we're planning for the upcoming school year. We hosted two Beat the Heat events and provided crucial education on staying hydrated and cool. Thanks to the generous support of Superior, we distributed AC units, box fans, generators, blenders, and even providing kids swimming pools. This program was a true collaboration with an amazing committee, including representatives from

Superior Health Plan, Hidalgo County Health Department, Texas Department of Family Protective Services & Adult Services, and Behavior Health Solutions. Another great program we implemented was the She Succeeds Program Series Workshop designed to empower women entering the workforce. Thank you for being an integral part of this journey.

*Joanne Ureste-Armijo*

Family & Community Health  
PVAMU-CEP Extension Agent

## In this issue:

This newsletter features valuable information, including

- A Parent's Guide to Halloween Nutrition and Safety
- A Focus on Diabetes Prevention
- Budget Friendly Bites
- Upcoming Programs for the Quarter
- PVAMU Making Lasting Impacts
- Program Highlights from Previous Quarter

## Safe & Sweet: A Parent's Guide to Halloween Nutrition and Safety

Halloween is a highlight of the year for many children, filled with the joy of costumes, community fun, and, of course, candy. While the excitement is undeniable, it's also an opportunity for parents to navigate the evening with a focus on both safety and smart nutrition. By being proactive, you can ensure the holiday remains a sweet memory without the health scares.

### Here are some tips for a safe and healthy Halloween:

1. Start with a Solid Foundation Before the trick-or-treating begins, offer your child a nutritious and filling meal. A dinner rich in protein and fiber, like chicken with roasted vegetables or a hearty soup, will help curb their appetite. A full stomach makes it less tempting for them to overindulge on candy right away, and can reduce the "sugar rush" that often accompanies an empty stomach and a pile of treats.

2. The Post-Haul Inspection: A Non-Negotiable Step Once the candy bags are home, a thorough inspection is crucial. This isn't just about looking for tampering; it's about checking for hidden dangers.

- **Choking Hazards:** Discard any small, hard candies that can be a choking risk, especially for young children. Small, unwrapped items or toys should also be removed from the candy pile.
- **Food Allergies:** This is a critical safety issue. Carefully read the labels on all packaged treats. If your child has a food allergy, separate the safe candy from the unsafe. Consider having a stash of their favorite "safe" treats ready to swap out for any they can't eat.
- **The Teal Pumpkin Project:** If you are giving out treats, consider joining the Teal Pumpkin Project by offering non-food items like stickers, small toys, or glow sticks. This simple act makes Halloween inclusive and safe for children with food allergies.

3. Develop a Strategy for the Candy Stash Instead of letting children graze on their candy for weeks, create a plan together. This teaches moderation and helps prevent a daily cycle of sugar consumption.

- **The "Favorite Few" Rule:** Let your child choose a handful of their absolute favorite treats to enjoy.
- **Set Limits:** Agree on a reasonable number of treats per day, perhaps one or two after a meal. This helps incorporate the candy into a balanced diet rather than it becoming the main focus.
- **Candy Trade-In:** For excess candy, consider a "candy fairy" or a "trade-in" system where your child can swap a portion of their haul for a toy, book, or a fun family experience like a trip to the park.

By following these simple steps, you can help your children enjoy the fun of Halloween while keeping their nutrition and safety top of mind.

## PVAMU Extension: A Legacy of Service

### A Land-Grant Legacy

Prairie View A&M University (PVAMU) Extension is a vital part of Texas's rich agricultural and educational heritage. As a land-grant institution, PVAMU was established in 1876 to provide higher education opportunities to African Americans. The Morrill Act of 1862, which established the land-grant university system, provided federal funding for agricultural and mechanical colleges. PVAMU, designated as a land-grant institution in 1914, has played a crucial role in advancing agriculture, science, and education in Texas.

### A Mission to Empower

PVAMU Extension's mission is to empower Texans by providing research-based knowledge and practical solutions. Through a network of county extension agents and specialists, the program delivers educational programs and resources to individuals, families, and communities across the state. The Extension's focus areas include:

- **Agriculture and Natural Resources:** Promoting sustainable agricultural practices, natural resource conservation, and food security.
- **Family and Community Health:** Improving the health and well-being of families and communities through programs on nutrition, health education, and financial literacy.
- **4-H Youth Development:** Inspiring young people to reach their full potential through hands-on learning experiences in science, agriculture, leadership, and citizenship.
- **Community Economic Development:** dedicated to supporting limited resource families and individuals in achieving a higher standard of living through various means, such as small business development, youth entrepreneurship, community program involvement, home ownership, government assistance programs, non-profit assistance, and workforce development.

### A Commitment to Service

PVAMU Extension is committed to serving the diverse needs of Texans, particularly those in underserved communities. By providing educational opportunities, technical assistance, and community outreach, the Extension helps to strengthen families, businesses, and communities.



# Prioritize Screening and Early Detection

October is widely recognized as Breast Cancer Awareness Month, often called "Pink October." It is a time dedicated to raising awareness about breast cancer and promoting prevention and early detection. While some risk factors for breast cancer cannot be changed (such as age, genetics, and family history), many lifestyle choices can help reduce your risk.

## 1. Prioritize Screening and Early Detection

- **Mammograms:** For women at average risk, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends a mammogram every two years starting at age 40. Discuss with your doctor what is right for you, as recommendations can vary based on individual risk factors. Regular mammograms are the most effective tool for finding breast cancer early, when it is most treatable.
- **Know Your Body:** Be familiar with how your breasts normally look and feel. This includes performing regular self-exams. If you notice any changes, such as a new lump, skin changes, or nipple discharge, report them to a healthcare provider immediately.

## 2. Adopt a Healthy Lifestyle

- **Maintain a Healthy Weight:** Obesity, especially after menopause, is linked to a higher risk of breast cancer. Maintaining a healthy weight through a balanced diet and regular exercise is a crucial preventive measure.
- **Be Physically Active:** Studies show that regular physical activity can lower breast cancer risk. Aim for at least 150-300 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75-150 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercise per week.
- **Limit Alcohol Consumption:** The risk of breast cancer increases with the amount of alcohol consumed. Women who choose to drink should limit their intake to no more than one drink per day.
- **Avoid Smoking:** Research suggests a link between long-term smoking and an increased risk of breast cancer. If you smoke, quitting is a major step toward lowering your risk.

## 3. Be Informed and Take Action

- **Understand Your Risk:** Talk to your doctor about your personal and family medical history to understand your individual risk factors. This is particularly important if you have a history of breast or ovarian cancer in your family.
- **Spread Awareness:** Wearing a pink ribbon or engaging on social media can also help raise awareness and encourage others to prioritize their breast health.

# Healthy Holidays Start Now: A Focus on Diabetes Prevention

November is recognized as National Diabetes Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about diabetes and promoting prevention strategies.

## The focus of diabetes prevention centers on making small, sustainable lifestyle changes.

- **Know Your Risk:** Encourage people to take a risk test to understand their personal likelihood of developing type 2 diabetes. Factors like family history, age, and weight play a significant role.
- **Healthy Eating:** Promote a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains while limiting sugary drinks and processed foods. The holiday season in November can be a challenging time, so a focus on balanced choices and portion control is especially relevant.
- **Get Active:** Encourage at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week. This helps with weight management and improves the body's sensitivity to insulin.
- **Manage Your Health:** Emphasize the importance of regular check-ups with a doctor, monitoring blood pressure and cholesterol, and getting adequate sleep.

Here's a short guide to help you thrive this month and beyond.

## 1. Recommit to Your Self-Management Routine

- **Monitor Blood Sugar:** Consistency is key. Make sure you're checking your blood sugar as advised by your doctor and documenting the results.
- **Medication Adherence:** Take your medications or insulin exactly as prescribed. If you have questions or concerns, speak with your healthcare provider.
- **Stay Active:** Physical activity is a powerful tool. Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week.
- **Mindful Eating:** Focus on balanced meals, paying attention to carbohydrate intake and portion sizes. The holiday season can be challenging, so plan ahead and make smart choices.

## Budget-Friendly Bites

### *Green Monster Smoothie*

#### INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup frozen spinach
- ¾ cup low-fat vanilla yogurt
- 1 medium banana
- ½ cup pineapple chunks in 100% juice
- Ice and water as needed



#### DIRECTIONS

1. Wash your hands and clean your cooking area.
2. Place ingredients in blender and blend until smooth.
3. Serve immediately. Cover and refrigerate leftovers. Enjoy!

For additional recipes, please visit: [https://www.pvamu.edu/cafnr/fch\\_recipes/](https://www.pvamu.edu/cafnr/fch_recipes/)

### *Fruit Salad*

#### INGREDIENTS

- 1 (8 ounce) can fruit cocktail packed in juice, drained
- 1 (8 ounce) can pineapple tidbits packed in juice, drained
- 1 apple, chopped
- 1 banana, sliced
- ½ cup (4 ounces) vanilla yogurt
- Pinch of cinnamon or nutmeg



#### DIRECTIONS

1. wash the apple.
2. Collect, cut, and measure all ingredients before starting to prepare the recipe.
3. Drain the juice from the cans of fruit cocktail and pineapple into a medium bowl. Toss the chopped apple and sliced banana in the fruit juice to prevent browning, then remove from the juice.\*
4. In a larger bowl, mix fruit cocktail, pineapple, apple, and banana.
5. In a small bowl, mix the yogurt and cinnamon or nutmeg.
6. Serve fruit salad in small bowls or cups. Top each serving with a spoonful of the yogurt mixture.
7. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours. Eat within 3 to 5 days

Recipe from Eat Smart Be Active

## Navigating the Holiday Season: A Guide to Stress-Free Shopping

The holiday season is a time for joy, celebration, and giving—but it can also be a time of significant financial stress. The pressure to buy gifts, host gatherings, and decorate can lead to overspending and lingering debt long after the new year. Here's a short guide to help you stay on track.

### 1. Set a Realistic Holiday Budget

- This is the most crucial step. Before you buy a single gift, determine how much you can comfortably afford to spend without going into debt. Break this total budget down into categories:
  - Gifts
  - Food and Groceries: Plan for holiday meals and gatherings.
  - Decorations: Decide on a spending limit for new lights, ornaments, or other festive items.
  - Travel and Entertainment: Account for gas, flights, or tickets to holiday events.

### 2. Start Shopping Early

- Waiting until the last minute often means paying full price or resorting to rushed decisions. By starting your shopping early, you can take advantage of sales throughout the fall, compare prices, and avoid the chaotic crowds. This proactive approach gives you the time to find the perfect gift at the right price.

### 3. Track Your Spending

- Whether you use a simple spreadsheet, a notebook, or a budgeting app, keep a running total of your holiday spending. Every time you make a purchase, log it and subtract it from your budget. This real-time tracking will give you a clear picture of where you stand and help you adjust your spending as needed to avoid exceeding your limit.

### 4. Explore Creative Alternatives

- Remember that the best gifts are often not the most expensive ones. Consider these alternatives to traditional store-bought gifts:
  - DIY Gifts: Handmade gifts like baked goods, crafts, or framed photos are personal and heartfelt.
  - Experience Gifts: Instead of a physical item, give a gift of time, like tickets to a concert, a museum membership, or a planned outing.
  - Gift Exchanges: Suggest a Secret Santa or White Elephant exchange with a spending limit among family or friends.

By planning ahead, setting clear limits, and focusing on what truly matters, you can enjoy a season of giving that is rich in joy and light on financial stress.

# PVAMU CEP: Making a Lasting Impact

## Beat the Heat Outcomes



This August, two "Beat the Heat" events brought together community members and resources to help people stay safe and cool during the hot weather.

The first event was held in Donna, Texas, this event focused on providing resources and fun for families.

- Attendance: 120 individuals, including 42 families.
- Partners: Superior Health Plan, Behavioral Health Solutions, Hidalgo County Health & Human Services Department, DFPS, and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.
- Highlights:
  - 15 vendors provided education, resources, and games for kids.
  - Families had the chance to win prizes like an AC unit, swimming pools, sunscreen, blenders, and box fans.
  - The event served 76 adults and 44 children.

The second event, was held at San Juan TX. This event was senior-focused.

- Attendance: 149 participants.
- Partners: Superior Health Plan, Behavioral Health Solutions, Hidalgo County Health & Human Services Department, DFPS, and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.
- Highlights:
  - 15 vendors attended, providing valuable resources.
  - The first 65 attendees received a free emergency kit.
  - Prizes included AC wall units, generators, blenders, lunch boxes, and umbrellas.
  - 12 volunteers from PVAMU CEP assisted with the event. The firm sponsored the volunteer shirts, which will be used for future community events.

Both events were a successful partnership between multiple organizations and were designed to support different members of the community in a fun and informative way.

## "A Taste of African Heritage" and "Bringing African History" Programs in South Texas



The "A Taste of African Heritage" program was developed and implemented by PAC members Valerie Ramirez and Dr. Raymond Howard to enrich the community of South Texas. The program aimed to add value to nutrition education by integrating it with African American heritage, specifically in celebration of Juneteenth.

Collaborating with the Dustin Sekula Library, the Juneteenth Committee, and Village in the Valley, the team hosted sessions at the Dustin Sekula Library throughout June and July. Each session featured a nutrition component, a demonstration of a plant-based African cuisine, and a historical discussion about African American landmarks in South Texas. Dr. Raymond Howard spoke about the Emancipation Proclamation and the importance of preserving traditions. The program also included a local chef, pilates instructor, and a local artist, ensuring a rich, multi-faceted experience for participants.

The extension agent focused on the "A Taste of African Heritage" curriculum. In each session, she taught participants about food groups, the benefits of good nutrition, and helpful tips for selecting produce. She encouraged individuals to eat more fruits and vegetables, and conducted food demonstrations where she discussed food safety, knife skills, and how to modify recipes.

The initiative was well-promoted through various channels, including a feature on local news channel KVENO-23, social media, community partners, and word-of-mouth.

The program concluded with a graduation ceremony, celebrating the participants' engagement and learning. Overall, the program was well-received and garnered excellent feedback from the community.

# Program Highlights from Previous Quarter

JULY – SEPTEMBER



I had the opportunity to present on car seat safety at Buckner Children and Family Services in Peñitas. It was a great experience sharing important tips and information to help keep our little ones safe on the road.



Texas has tragically seen two child fatalities from vehicular heatstroke this year, both occurring in South Texas. In response, I've been actively providing social media education and increasing my visibility with community agencies. I participated in an information booth fair at

Easter Seals Family Resource Center, where I shared crucial car seat safety and prevention tips to avoid leaving children in vehicles.

It's amazing how good music, great company, and some movement can truly lift spirits and get hearts pumping. I saw this firsthand while working with teens and implementing



Teen Cuisine, a program that successfully blended staying active with having a blast.



I participated in a Health & Wellness fair in Mission, Texas, where I shared information about PVAMU CEP FCH programs offered in Hidalgo County, as well as tips on staying hydrated and promoting upcoming events.



We just wrapped up our ATOAH program! In partnership with the Juneteenth Committee and the Edinburg Library, participants came together to explore healthy eating habits while learning about the deep

cultural roots of African heritage. From delicious, wholesome recipes to meaningful conversations about history and health, this program nourished both body and soul.



I promoted the "Beat the Heat" family program on local Channel 48 in Spanish. Thank you La Salud del Valle. I also had the opportunity to promote the event at KVNEO-Channel 23.



I was honored to receive five state awards, including the most prestigious honor an agent can achieve, during the TEAFCS State Conference. In addition to my recognition, I played a key role in the event by assisting with a retiree workshop, serving on the

state awards committee, and leading the planning for the food, decorations, and friendship event. Thank you to my great team! We sought a donation for the ENHS marachi welcome ceremony. Lastly, we held a PVAMU FCH booth at the state conference.

Our last ATOAH session at Sacred Heart just concluded, marking the end of an incredible journey! Since January, we've successfully implemented four SNAP Programs. It's been inspiring to see participants gain energy, increase their movement and flexibility, lose weight, and, best of all, try the recipes at home.



# Program Highlights from Previous Quarter



JULY – SEPTEMBER



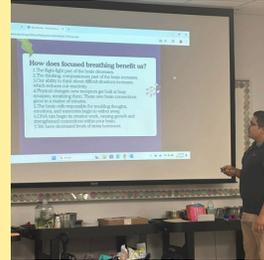
I provided a two-hour training session to 20 childcare providers, focusing on essential nutrition principles and effective physical play exercises tailored for early childhood development.



I trained Vanguard Parent Involvement Specialists on strategies for building stronger family bonds. Additionally, you provided them with a nutrition class focusing on the ESBA (Eating Smart, Being Active) curriculum



I attended the ARE Conference, which provided a wealth of great information. It was an excellent opportunity to collaborate and discuss ideas with my colleagues, and I really value the chance to learn from everyone's unique experiences. I especially admire the agents who demonstrate an ability to adapt to the specific needs of their communities.



I led a successful "train the trainer" program for 19 teachers at Vanguard Academy, spanning elementary to high school grade levels. We taught the teachers to tailor the curriculum with the goal of equipping their students with positive coping skills and the knowledge to understand mental health matters and seek help. I would like to thank Victor Cantu, Starr County Extension Agent for assisting me in this training.



In collaboration with Easter Seals, I implemented the "Building Better Family Bonds" program. As a further benefit, Easter Seals generously provided diapers to the children of program graduates.



I connected with ASAS Health to enhance two of their community events that offered free produce. During these events, I educated participants on the MyPlate model and provided valuable information on healthy snacking and hydration.

Our program area committee recently convened to discuss the implementation of upcoming programs. A key discussion point was the planning of a new fundraising initiative in partnership with a 5K event. This collaborative effort will be held in November and is designed to actively promote healthy living and good nutrition within the community.



I helped co-lead the creation of a D12 interpretation for our South Texas extension agents, which showcased all PVAMU program areas. This interpretation highlighted the great work we do in South Texas and was a valuable opportunity to collaborate with leadership and show our families the agency's headquarters.



# Program Highlights from Previous Quarter

JULY – SEPTEMBER

## Eat Smart, Live Strong



During September, I implemented the Eat Smart, Be Active program at three centers: the San Juan Memorial Library, CenterWell-Edinburg, and CenterWell-McAllen. This program educates seniors on nutrition and incorporates chair exercises. Participants learn how to eat more fruits and vegetables, reduce sodium and sugar, and read nutrition fact labels. They also taste-test healthy, inexpensive recipes. The participants have truly enjoyed the program and are eager to attend each week. Many have mentioned that their energy has improved. I've also challenged participants to get 30 minutes of exercise daily, which they can break up throughout the day.

## Eat Smart, Be Active



I've been invited by Iglesia Bautista Getsemani to lead the Eat Smart, Be Active program. This series helps individuals on their journey to a healthier life by teaching them how to use MyPlate as a guide to eat more fruits and vegetables.



Each session includes a fun, 30-minute workout that incorporates cardio, strength

training, balance, and flexibility exercises set to music. The participants truly enjoy moving and having fun while getting in a good sweat!

## Workforce Readiness Program Series



In September, which is Workforce Month, we launched an interdisciplinary program series to help individuals get jobs, manage their finances, and improve their nutrition. Through a new partnership between PVAMU, Workforce Solutions, and Sisters Inspiring Success, we provided participants with the confidence and skills to find great jobs. The program series covered everything from resume building and interview tips to networking and creating healthy, on-the-go meals. Graduates received an outfit for their job interviews, and the series concluded with a successful job fair featuring 41 employers.

## Save the Date: Annual Fundraiser



Due to a cut in our SNAP funding, we no longer have funds for food demonstrations. To continue our nutrition and Family and Community Health (FCH) programs, our Program Area Committee came up with a new fundraising idea: our first-ever 5K on November 16, 2025.

A huge thank you to the City of Edinburg for waiving the fee to support our programs. We invite you to join us! If you or your organization would like to be a sponsor, please contact me at [juarmijo@pvamu.edu](mailto:juarmijo@pvamu.edu).



## Thank You to Our Valued Sponsors



**superior  
healthplan™**

Superior Health Plan sponsored "Beat the Heat" events in South Texas to educate families, seniors, and people of all ages on the importance of staying hydrated, eating fruits and vegetables, and practicing sun

safety. Superior HealthPlan is a managed care organization that offers health insurance plans in Texas, primarily through government-sponsored programs like Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). They also provide Medicare coverage and plans on the Health Insurance Marketplace.

The company is known for its "members-first" approach, focusing on the overall health of individuals and forming community partnerships to support them. Since 1999, Superior HealthPlan has served nearly 2 million Texas residents across all 254 counties. They are a company of Centene Corporation, a large healthcare enterprise.



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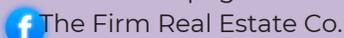


The Firm Real Estate Co. proudly sponsored the PVAMU Volunteer shirts, which are worn at all PVAMU FCH programs and community events.

The Firm Real Estate Co. is a real estate firm based in McAllen, Texas. They provide a range of services for consumers and investors in the Rio Grande Valley area. Their services include:

- **Buying and Selling:** They represent both buyers and sellers in residential and commercial real estate transactions.
- **Building:** They are involved in construction and development, with some of their listings being new construction homes.
- **Investing:** The firm works with clients on various investment properties, including residential homes, multi-family units, and commercial land.

Please follow their facebook page at:



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## Upcoming Programs

- **Childcare Presentation**
  - Hampton's Inn-Pharr
    - October 4, 2025
- **Healthy Aging**
  - CenterWell Senior Primary Care
    - Every Wednesday in October; 10 a.m.
  - Dustin Sekula Library
    - Every Thursday in October; 2 p.m.
- **Money Smart: From Savings Goals to Closing Deals.**
  - San Juan Memorial Library
    - October 7, 2025; 9:30 a.m.
- **Live well, Eat well, be Active with Diabetes**
  - McAllen Public Library; 2 p.m.
    - Every Monday in November; 2 p.m.
  - Dustin Sekula Library; 2 p.m.
    - Every Thursday in November; 2 p.m.
- **Choose Health Food, Fun, and Fitness**
  - San Juan Memorial Library
    - Every Friday in November; 10 a.m.

**Find all of our upcoming events on Facebook**

Prairie View A&M Cooperative Extension Program- FCH Hidalgo County



## Upcoming Office Holidays

**Indigenous People's Day**

- October 13, 2025

**Thanksgiving**

- November 27 & 28, 2025

**Christmas**

- December 25 & 26, 2025

**New Year's Eve**

- December 31, 2025

## Investing in Growth

**NEAFCS Conference, Grand Rapids, Michigan**

- October 20-24, 2025

**D12 Fall Faculty**

- December 9-10, 2025

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