

PVAMU EXTENSION

# CONNECTING HEALTH AND COMMUNITY



## Extension Agent Note

I am thrilled to welcome you to our Spring edition. Spring is the time to embrace growth, renew our commitment to health, and step outdoors to enjoy the progress we've made together.

It has been an incredibly busy and rewarding few months. Our recent Heart Series for Heart Month in February was a resounding success through our wonderful community partnership. Also, I've had the privilege of connecting with many of you through ongoing parenting classes at Sharyland ISD and the county jail. My commitment to bringing the best resources to our area has also led me to some personal milestones; I am proud to share that I have recently become a certified Tai Chi for Arthritis instructor, as well as a CarFit Technician and CarFit Event Coordinator. These certifications allow me to offer even more specialized support for our physical wellness and safety initiatives.

Looking ahead, I am eager to represent our county at the 27th International Family Conference. My goal is to gather innovative strategies and global resources that we can implement right here at home to strengthen our families and community ties.

As we welcome the vibrant energy of April, it is a particularly significant time for our office and the community we serve. April is National Volunteer Month, a time dedicated to recognizing the selfless individuals who donate their time, talent, and heart to improve the lives of others.

The extensive work we do throughout the year—from health and wellness workshops to safety initiatives—simply could not be accomplished without the dedication of our amazing volunteers. You are the backbone of our programming, and your commitment ensures that our mission reaches every corner of the county. Your willingness to serve is truly an inspiration to me and to our entire organization. Thank you for being the heart of our community and for helping us grow a healthier, safer future together.

*Joanne Wrester*

Family & Community Health  
PVAMU Extension Agent

### In this issue:

This newsletter features valuable information, including

- No More April Fools: Getting Serious About Savings
- More Good Days, Together: Prioritizing Mental Health This May
- Sip Into Summer: Your Guide to Staying Hydrated
- Budget-Friendly Bites
- PVAMU CEP: Making a Lasting Impact
- Program Highlights from Previous Quarter
- Thank You to Our Valued Sponsor
- FCH Program Catalog and Services
- Upcoming Programs

## No More April Fools: Getting Serious About Savings

### Gaining Financial Freedom and Peace of Mind

Perhaps the most significant benefit of robust savings is the sense of freedom and peace of mind it provides. When you know you have a financial cushion, you feel less stressed, more in control, and better able to make choices that align with your values. Financial literacy empowers you to stop being a "fool" to financial anxiety and start building a life on your own terms.

### Tips for Getting Serious About Savings This April:

- 1. Audit Your Spending:** Take an honest look at where your money is going. Use budgeting apps or spreadsheets to track every expense for a few weeks. You'll likely be surprised by how much is spent on unnecessary items.
- 1. Create a Realistic Budget:** Based on your audit, create a budget that allocates your income towards essentials, debt repayment, and, most importantly, savings. Be realistic, but look for areas where you can cut back.
- 2. Automate Your Savings:** One of the most effective ways to save is to make it automatic. Set up a direct deposit from your paycheck into your savings account, or schedule monthly transfers. If you don't see the money in your checking account, you're less likely to spend it.
- 3. Set Specific Goals:** Give your savings a purpose. Instead of just "saving more," set a goal like "save \$1,000 for an emergency fund" or "save \$5,000 for a down payment."
- 4. Educate Yourself:** Take advantage of the resources available during Financial Literacy Month. Read books, listen to podcasts, attend workshops, and explore reputable financial websites. Knowledge is your greatest asset.

### Did You Know?

Prairie View A&M University (PVAMU) Extension is more than just a resource for health and wellness—it's a launchpad for local entrepreneurs! If you've been dreaming of turning an idea into a reality but don't know where to begin, we have a dedicated Community & Economic Development (CED) Agent ready to guide you. A solid business plan is the foundation of any successful venture, and you don't have to draft yours alone.

### Meet Your Resource: Rina Castillo

Rina specializes in helping community members navigate the complexities of starting a business. Whether you are in the brainstorming phase or ready to put pen to paper, she can provide the professional insight needed to build a comprehensive business plan. To get in contact with Rina, please e-mail her at [rdcastillo@pvamu.edu](mailto:rdcastillo@pvamu.edu)

## 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.



# More Good Days, Together: Prioritizing Mental Health This May



May is National Mental Health Month, a time dedicated to breaking the stigma surrounding mental health and highlighting the resources available to help us thrive. This year's theme, "More Good Days, Together," reminds us that mental well-being is not just an individual journey—it is something we build within our families and communities.

As part of the Family & Consumer Sciences (FCS) mission, we know that mental health is deeply connected to every other part of our lives. When we are mentally well, we are better equipped to manage our finances, nourish our bodies, and nurture our relationships.

## FCS Tips for a Mentally Healthy Month

Maintaining mental wellness doesn't always require grand gestures; often, it's the small, daily habits in our homes and lifestyles that make the biggest difference.

- **Nourish Your Connection (The Gut-Brain Link):** What you eat affects how you feel. Focus on a balanced diet rich in whole foods, which can help stabilize your mood and energy levels.
- **Move for Your Mood:** Physical activity is a powerful stress-reliever. Whether it's a 10-minute walk, gardening, or line dancing, moving your body releases endorphins that naturally boost your spirit.
- **Practice Financial Self-Care:** Financial stress is a leading cause of anxiety. Use this month to organize one small area of your finances—like creating a simple weekly budget—to gain a sense of control and peace of mind.
- **Create a "Rest Nest":** Your home environment plays a huge role in your stress levels. Designate a specific area in your home for relaxation, free from screens and clutter, where you can practice mindful breathing or quiet reflection.
- **Set Healthy Boundaries:** Healthy relationships start with knowing when to say "no." Protecting your time and energy is a vital form of self-respect that prevents burnout.

## Sip Into Summer: Your Guide to Staying Hydrated

As the temperatures climb in South Texas, staying hydrated isn't just a matter of comfort—it's a critical part of your overall health and safety. Whether you are working in the garden, going for a run, or simply running errands, the heat can deplete your body's water reserves faster than you might realize. June 23rd is National Hydration Day! It serves as a great reminder to check in on your habits before the hottest months of July and August arrive.

Here is how to keep your cool and stay hydrated during the peak of summer.

**1. Drink Before You're Thirsty** Thirst is actually a late sign of dehydration. By the time you feel thirsty, your body is already running low.

- **The Sip Strategy:** Aim for small, frequent sips throughout the day rather than "chugging" large amounts at once.
- **Morning Kickstart:** Start your day with a full glass of water before your morning coffee to replenish what you lost while sleeping.

**2. Eat Your Water** Hydration doesn't just come from a glass; it comes from your plate, too. Many seasonal fruits and vegetables are over 90% water and provide essential vitamins.

- **Top Hydrators:** Watermelon, cucumbers, strawberries, celery, and zucchini are excellent choices.
- **FCS Tip:** Try chilled cucumber slices or frozen grapes for a refreshing, hydrating snack that the whole family will love.

**3. Watch Your "Dehydrators"** Certain drinks can actually pull moisture from your body. During extreme heat, try to limit:

- Caffeine and Alcohol: Both act as diuretics, which increase fluid loss.
- Sugary Sodas: High sugar content can sometimes hinder water absorption. If you crave flavor, try infusing your water with fresh mint, lemon, or lime.

**4. Dress for the Heat** What you wear affects how much you sweat. To keep your body from overworking itself:

- Choose lightweight, light-colored, and loose-fitting clothing.
- Natural fabrics like cotton allow your skin to breathe better than many synthetics.

## Budget-Friendly Bites

### Entrée CUCUMBER MINT SALAD

#### INGREDIENTS

List:

- 4½ Cups Chopped Fresh Cucumbers
- 1 Teaspoon Rice Vinegar
- ½ Teaspoon Chopped Fresh Mint
- 1 Teaspoon Fresh Lemon Juice
- ¼ Teaspoon Iodized Salt
- 1 Teaspoon Natural Honey
- 1 Teaspoon Grated Parmesan Cheese
- ¼ Teaspoon Fresh Thyme
- ¼ Teaspoon Cardamom Powder
- 2 Cups Sliced Cherry Tomatoes

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#### DIRECTIONS

1. In a medium bowl, combine cucumbers, rice vinegar, mint, lemon juice, salt, honey, parmesan cheese, thyme, sliced cherry tomatoes, and cardamom.
2. Toss until evenly covered.
3. Cover and refrigerate at least 1 hour to blend flavors.
4. Remove and serve cold.

### Entrée PURSLANE DEVILED EGGS

#### INGREDIENTS

List:

- 1 Dozen Large Raw Eggs
- ½ Cup Lite Mayonnaise
- ½ Cup Pickle Relish
- ½ Cup Finely Chopped Fresh Purslane
- 1 Teaspoon Turmeric Powder
- ¼ Teaspoon Iodized Salt
- ¼ Teaspoon Paprika Powder

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#### DIRECTIONS

1. In a large pot, add eggs and cover with water. (About an inch above the top of the eggs) Bring to a boil.
2. Remove pot from heat; Cover and let stand 12 minutes. The egg whites and yolks should be firm and not runny.
3. Place eggs in a large bowl of ice water. This will stop the cooking process. Cool about 8 minutes or until cool enough for you to safely peel them without burning yourself.
4. Peel eggs by cracking the outer shell on the countertop and removing the cracked shell. Place egg in a colander and rinse under cold running water.
5. Cut each egg lengthwise, remove the yolk and place in a small bowl. Place the white portion of the egg on a plate.
6. Add mayonnaise, relish, and purslane to the yolks in the small bowl. Mix thoroughly.
7. Sprinkle turmeric and salt over egg yolk mixture. Mix thoroughly.
8. Using a piping bag or place egg mixture into a resealable plastic bag; Cut off the corner of the bag or spoon yolk mixture into the hole of each egg white.
9. Lightly sprinkle paprika over each egg to garnish (optional).

Recipe from Seasonal Sips & Soulful Bites

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

## A Legacy of Service: Remembering Sandy Riojas

Mrs. Sandy Riojas, a steadfast champion of community growth and a pillar of the Extension family. Sandy passed away this February, leaving behind a profound legacy of service that touched countless lives throughout her years of volunteerism.



Sandy was an exceptional partner to both Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and Prairie View A&M University (PVAMU) Extension. She didn't just volunteer; she truly understood the heart of the Extension mission—bringing research-based knowledge to the people to improve lives.

Sandy's commitment was visible through her active leadership and "can-do" spirit. She served with distinction on several key boards and committees, including:

- PAC Leadership Team: Providing essential guidance and advocacy for community programs.
- The Heart Committee: Working tirelessly to promote cardiovascular health and wellness.
- The Diabetes Committee: Helping neighbors manage their health through education and support.

Beyond her official titles, Sandy was known for her unwavering willingness to help. Whether it was a large-scale community event or a small task behind the scenes, she was always the first to step forward. Her dedication was fueled by a genuine love for her community and a deep belief in the power of education.

Sandy was more than a volunteer; she was a friend, a leader, and an inspiration. While she will be deeply missed by her colleagues and the community she served so well, her influence will continue to be felt through the programs she helped build and the lives she helped change.

# PVAMU Extension: Making a Lasting Impact

## Navigating Arthritis with Tai Chi

I recently received my Tai Chi for Arthritis & Fall Prevention Instructor Certification. This journey has been incredibly rewarding, and I've already seen firsthand how this "meditation in motion" is transforming the lives of our community members.

Over the past few months, we have successfully integrated Tai Chi into our signature PVAMU Extension programs. By blending the gentle movements of Tai Chi with the nutritional and wellness foundations of Eating Smart, Being Active, Eating Smart, Live Strong, LEAD, and Rhythm of the Heart, we are providing a truly holistic approach to health.



### Success Across the County

We recently wrapped up fantastic program series at several wonderful locations:

- Mayor Joe V. Sánchez Public Library in Weslaco
- CenterWell locations in both Edinburg and McAllen

The energy and dedication of the participants at these sites have been inspiring. Seeing everyone improve their balance while also learning how to fuel their bodies correctly is exactly why we do this work!

### Looking Ahead: Join Us in Edinburg!

The momentum is just beginning. I am eager to bring these benefits to even more neighbors across our area. Our next series is right around the corner:

- Where: Dustin M. Sekula Memorial Library, Edinburg
- When: Every Thursday throughout the month of April

### Why Tai Chi?

If you've been on the fence about trying a class, here are just a few reasons why Tai Chi is a powerhouse for your health:

- **Improved Balance and Coordination:** By focusing on slow, deliberate weight shifts, Tai Chi significantly reduces the risk of falls, especially for older adults.
- **Reduced Joint Pain:** The gentle, low-impact movements are designed specifically to increase flexibility and reduce the stiffness associated with arthritis.
- **Stress Reduction:** The deep breathing and rhythmic movements help calm the nervous system, reducing anxiety and promoting mental clarity.
- **Increased Muscle Strength:** While it looks effortless, the sustained poses help build core and leg strength.
- **Heart Health:** Much like our Rhythm of the Heart program, Tai Chi supports cardiovascular health by improving circulation and lowering blood pressure.

I look forward to seeing many of you in April as we continue to move, breathe, and grow together!

## Hidalgo County Empowers Senior Drivers Through CarFit Training and Community Event

Hidalgo County recently took a proactive step in enhancing road safety for mature drivers by hosting a comprehensive CarFit Training and community outreach event. This initiative focused on ensuring that senior drivers are properly matched to their vehicles to improve both comfort and safety behind the wheel.



The program kicked off with a specialized training session led by AgriLife Mature Drivers experts. During this intensive presentation, 12 dedicated volunteers were trained and certified as CarFit Technicians. The curriculum provided these volunteers with the skills to:

- Conduct 12-point driver-to-vehicle "fit" checklists.
- Educate drivers on the proper mirror settings to minimize blind spots.
- Ensure appropriate distance between the driver and the steering wheel/airbag.
- Check for proper seat belt use and head restraint positioning.



Following the certification of the new technicians, a public CarFit event was held on Friday, March 6, 2026, at CenterWell Senior Primary Care. This event served as a practical application of the technicians' new skills and a vital resource for local residents.

We would like to extend a sincere thank you to Rick Castro and the entire team at CenterWell for their generosity in hosting us at their facility and supporting this important safety mission.



To ensure maximum community involvement, the event was widely promoted through local media partnerships with Channel 4 and Channel 23. Thanks to this outreach, instructors and technicians were able to provide one-on-one education and vehicle adjustments to 13 seniors.

## Sponsors



We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to Melden & Hunt, Inc. for their generous donation to our local account, which directly supports our valuable programs and dedicated volunteers at PVAMU Extension.

About Melden & Hunt, Inc.

Founded right here in Edinburg, Texas, in 1947, Melden & Hunt, Inc. is a leading full-service consulting, engineering, and surveying firm. Over the decades, the company has become the foremost engineering and surveying firm in the Rio Grande Valley and South Texas, known for offering the most diverse array of professional services available in the region.

Since its inception, Melden & Hunt, Inc. has assembled a strong team of professional engineers, registered land surveyors, design technicians, construction inspectors, and administrative support, all possessing the expertise required to provide a broad range of professional services. Their commitment to the community extends beyond their professional work, and we are grateful for their support in helping us achieve our mission.



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:

The Firm Real Estate Co.



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### HORTENSIA ORTEGA BOOKS

Hortensia Ortega is an author who writes bilingual children's books. The most prominent book she has written is the bilingual alphabet and early learning book:

- I Can Speak: A-Z: Puedo Hablar: A-Z (Also listed as I Can Speak, Puedo Hablar: A-Z)
  - This is a simple book designed to help young children (typically ages 3-5) identify the letters of the alphabet.
  - The images are selected to correspond with the same letter in both English and Spanish.
  - It is described as a bilingual tool for children learning both English and Spanish and includes pages for drawing and writing.
- I Can Speak, Puedo Hablar: Little Sentences, Pequeñas Frases
- I Can Speak: 0-20. Puedo Hablar: 0-20
- I Can Speak, Puedo Hablar: With My Mom, Con Mi Mamá
- I Can Speak, Puedo Hablar: With My Dad, Con Mi Papá



### DR. ISELA ALMAGUER

The President of our Program Area Committee is Dr. Almaguer, a Professor at UTRGV. Her scholarly work includes the publication, *Fostering Successful Communities of Collaboration Through Educational Partnerships: Strengthening Bilingual Learners' Language and Literacy Achievement Along the Texas-Mexican Border*



### SYLVIA PAHL

As the Treasurer for our Program Area Committee, Mrs. Pahl is a deeply committed community member. Her involvement includes serving as President for the MCV and Vice President for the Friends of the Library. Additionally, she contributes by making and donating quilts to the community.

## FCH Program Catalog and Services

PVAMU Extension's Family & Community Health Programs are designed to improve the overall health and well-being of individuals and families within your community. These programs are free and offer research-based information and practical skills to address a wide range of needs. Our objective is to deliver program series that drive significant knowledge acquisition and measurable behavioral change among participants. A minimum of 10 participants is required to run each series.

### Financial/ Money Management Programs



- Money Matters
- Savvy Saving Seniors
- Your Money Your Goals

### Health & Wellness Programs



- Balanced Living
- Healthy Aging
- Mind Matters
- Navigating Arthritis with Tai Chi
- Stress Management

### Nutrition Programs



- A Taste of African Heritage
- A Taste of Latin Heritage
- CHFFF Choose Health Food, Fun, and Fitness
- ESLS: Eat Smart, Live Strong
- ESBA: Eating Smart Being Active
- LEAD: Live well, Eat well, be Active with Diabetes

### Strengthening Families Programs



- Building Better Family Bonds
- Bullying Prevention
- Car Seat Safety
- Internet Safety for Parent

### How We Can Help:

- **Educational Workshops and Seminars:** Attend informative sessions on various topics related to family and community health.
- **Community Outreach Events:** Participate in health fairs, screenings, and other community events.

By partnering with PVAMU Extension, you can gain the knowledge and skills needed to make informed decisions and improve your quality of life.

## Upcoming Programs

- **A Taste of Latin American Heritage**
  - Dustin Sekula Library
    - Every Tuesday in June & July; 2 p.m.
- **Choose Health: Food, Fun, and Fitness**
  - Sgt. Fernando De La Rosa Memorial Library
    - Every Thursday in June; 10 a.m.
- **Eat Smart, Be Active (Health Program & Cardio)**
  - Mayor Joe V. Sanchez Public Library
    - Every Wednesday in July; 10 a.m.
- **Eat Smart, Live Strong. (Health Program & Arthritis )**
  - Dustin Sekula Library
    - Every Thursday in April; 2 p.m.
  - Sgt. Fernando De La Rosa Memorial Library
    - Every Tuesday in June; 10 a.m.
- **Mind Matters**
  - Dustin Sekula Library
    - Every Thursday in May; 2 p.m.
- **Strategies for a Healthy Professional Lifestyle**
  - McAllen Public Library
    - Monday, April 20, 2026; 6p.m.
- **Your Money, Your Goals (Financial Literacy)**
  - McAllen Public Library
    - Every Tuesday, starting March 31 to April 14, 2026 at 2 p.m.

Find all of our upcoming events on Facebook  
 Prairie View A&M Extension Program- FCH Hidalgo County



### Upcoming Office Holidays

#### Memorial Day

May 25, 2026

#### Juneteenth

January 19, 2026

#### Independence Day

July 3, 2026

### Investing in Growth

#### 27<sup>th</sup> International Family Conference

- April 12-17, 2026-Los Angeles, CA

#### D12 Regional Program Planning

- May 11-13, 2026-San Antonio, TX

#### ARE Conference

- May 17-22, 2026-Houston, TX

#### Mental Health Conference

- June 22-26, 2026-Prairie View, TX

#### Texas Traffic Safety Conference

- July 13-17, 2026-Dallas, TX

#### TEAFCS State Conference

- July 27-230, 2026-Galveston TX

### Contact Information

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