Leadership Advisory Board
Travis County

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ranchers and other landowners wanting to get control of prickly pear, cedar and various noxious weeds on their property,” said Julie Ansley, the new Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources. “People find many pesticides that serve their purposes require a license to purchase them. This is where receiving training to get a Private Fescicide Applicators License for state limit and restricted use of pesticides is extremely useful.”

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension coordinated with TDA to present these trainings, most of which are provided at the Extension office in Travis County. “We’ll have a few more PAT programs before the end of this year, and anticipate having eight or nine in 2013,” Ansley said.

**Soil Fertility Series Utilizes Education via Technology**

A total of 32 Travis County residents attended a four-part computer-link seminar series on soil fertility and mineral nutrition held weekly at the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service office in Travis County from Sept. 4-25.

Series sessions were held on consecutive Tuesdays, with each session focusing on a different nutrient or nutrients. Nutrient groupings were divided into nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium, magnesium and sulphur, and micronutrients.

“Each session covered the role of that week’s element or elements in plant and soil material in regard to leaching potential, the best method of application, proper application rates and timing, and symptoms of deficiency or toxicity,” said Daphne Richards, A&M AgriLife Extension agent for Horticulture in Travis County and a seminar coordinator.

Richards said sessions were presented via computer link and were led by Dr. Sam Fegley, A&M AgriLife Extension State Soil Environmental Specialist in College Station.

“This was a special opportunity for attendees as Dr. Fegley rarely provides his expertise to those outside his classroom,” she said. He addressed commercial inorganic and organic sources of nutrients, as well as as ‘snake oil’ products with little or no nutrient value.”

Richards said she believed attendees ranging from backyard gardeners to current and future farmers in urban and rural communities benefited from the seminars.

**Youth Leadership Program Teaches Public Speaking Skills**

Sixteen young people from 4-H clubs in Travis County participated in the 2012 Youth Leadership Program 3-day seminar held in July at the Goodwill Community Center in Austin.

“This program is a joint effort between Toastmasters and Travis County 4-H and is designed for youth ages 12 to 18 years of age,” said Cory Talley, agent for 4-H and Youth Development. “The goal of this program is to help youth become more comfortable in developing and delivering speeches, speaking off the cuff, and learning to use hand gestures and voice inflection in their speaking.”

Attendees gained skills and knowledge in public speaking and delivering speeches, Talley said. They were asked to write and evaluate three speeches, as well as stand before their peers to deliver five impromptu speeches of their own. Feedback on the speeches was given by other participants.

A recognition ceremony, which included friends and family, was held the final night of the program. During the event, the youth delivered speeches to a crowd of about 50 attendees.

“Another assignment for the program involved participants writing a motivational speech,” Talley said. “One participant chose to write her speech on why others should participate in the Youth Leadership Program. That was pretty special.”

Richards said she believed attendees ranging from backyard gardeners to current and future farmers in urban and rural communities benefited from the seminars.

In 2002, the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Travis County reached out to AmeriCorps by requesting grant money and assistance to help increase the breadth and impact of its 4-H CAPITAL youth programs. As a result, the Travis County CAPITAL AmeriCorps Project (TCCAP) has been able to serve at-risk youth throughout the county under the banner of the 4-H CAPITAL program for a decade.

“The grant has been annually renewed since then, allowing us to further expand our program and activities,” said Lydia Domaruk, agent for Urban Youth Development, 4-H CAPITAL Project.

The program began with 19 half-time AmeriCorps volunteers serving a handful of schools and community sites. Over the years, this has expanded to a total of 16 half-time and 16 full-time AmeriCorps volunteers serving in more than 25 schools across the Austin and Del Valle school districts.

Since its inception TCCAP AmeriCorps members have served approximately 10,000 youth through community service projects, school day curriculum enrichment and after school education in the areas of science enrichment and character education.

**Photo:** 4-H CAPITAL AmeriCorps member Kristen Aaltonen shows students at Norman Elementary how to plant vegetables as part of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Services’ Junior Master Gardener program.

Kristen Aaltonen, 4-H CAPITAL AmeriCorps member, received Governor’s Volunteer Award

Kristen Aaltonen, an AmeriCorps member working in conjunction with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Travis County, was presented a state and national award for her work in connection with the 4-H CAPITAL and Junior Master Gardner programs.

Aaltonen received a Governor’s Volunteer Award – the AmeriCorps State and National “Getting Things Done” Award – at the recent 2012 Texas Nonprofit Summit in Austin.

“It was great to receive an award for helping at-risk kids in second through fifth grade get education and enrichment experiences they would not otherwise have had the opportunity to participate in,” Aaltonen said.

Aaltonen worked with at-risk youth at two Title I elementary schools, teaching the 4-H CAPITAL urban animal science program at Pecan Springs Elementary and spearheading the Junior Master Gardener program at Norman Elementary.

Currently 32 AmeriCorps members, including Aaltonen, work with A&M AgriLife Extension in Travis County, serving more than 25 schools in Austin and Del Valle independent school districts.