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Travis County

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For more information about these and other events, please call 512-854-9600 or visit our website:

<http://travis-tx.tamu.edu/>

Calendar of Events

August 2013

6 Strong Starts: Urban Farming 101
8 Fall/Winter Vegetable Gardening Program
8 Rainwater Harvesting Seminar
12 Professional yoU! Workshop
13 Take a Stand Workshop
13 Horticultural Options on Small Acreage
16 4-H Achievement Banquet
17 Rainwater Harvesting Workshop
17 4-H Livestock Projects Workshop
20 Philips Career Day
23 Winter Forage Workshop
24 District 10 4-H Conference
29 Leadership Advisory Board meeting

September 2013

2 Labor Day Observed - OFFICE CLOSED
12 Drought Tolerant Plants in Your Landscape
17 M-44 Training
26-27 Science of Agriculture Expo.

October 2013

5 Water Wise Open House
6-12 National 4-H Week
10 Selecting and Planting the Best Trees for Austin
16 Bee Keeping Workshop
19 Fruit Tree Seminar

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY
Cooperative Extension Program

In Cooperation With...

TRAVIS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' COURT

Samuel T. Biscoe
County Judge

Ron Davis
Commissioner, Precinct 1

Bruce Todd
Commissioner, Precinct 2

Gerald Daugherty
Commissioner, Precinct 3

Margaret Gomez
Commissioner, Precinct 4

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TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY
Cooperative Extension Program

Making a Difference

SUMMER 2013

in Travis County



Dolores Sandmann
County Extension Director
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
Travis County

Message from the Director:

I hope you enjoy the Summer issue of our newsletter. This is always a busy time of the year with many programs, camps and leadership opportunities available through Extension.

I especially wanted to highlight Travis County employees who recently participated in the *Walk Across Texas!* Challenge. A celebration event was held on June 27 where the following physical activity achievements were recognized:

- 223 total adults participated on 29 teams.
- 204 adults finished the 8-week program logging **44,791.77 miles**, which equals walking 54 times across Texas.
- 38 Individuals could prevent the onset of diabetes through increased physical activity over their lifetime.
- **\$2,267,470 million dollars** could be saved in potential lifetime healthcare costs and lost wages by participants.

A special thanks goes to Iman Hammoudeh, with the Travis County Wellness & Health Clinic, for serving as the *Walk Across Texas* site manager and for coordinating the Celebration Event!

For more information about Extension programs in Travis County, please visit our website at travis-tx.tamu.edu.

Best wishes,

-Dolores Sandmann

Hatching in the Classroom Brings Nature to Urban Kids

"Hatching in the Classroom" is a teacher and student favorite for curriculum enrichment provided through the 4-H and Youth Development program of AgriLife Extension in Travis County.

"For local schools, it is a great opportunity for students to be part of a 4-H project," said Cory Talley, AgriLife Extension agent, 4-H and Youth Development. "During the 2012-2013 year, ten schools had incubators with 1,735 students being reached, a 42% increase in participation over last year."

Several of the schools participating this year were new to the program: Austin Jewish Academy, Magellan International, Eden Park Academy, Forest Trail Elementary and Cowan Elementary.

Talley said a Texas 4-H Youth Development Foundation grant allowed the Travis County 4-H program to obtain additional incubators and supplies. "Without new incubators, the 4-H program would not have been able to offer the curriculum program to as many schools as we did," she said.

Talley said increasing youth knowledge and awareness of nature were among the most important goals of this project.

"Living in an urban setting, many of the youth do not understand where the chicks come from or the science behind the hatching process or what happens after the chick hatches," she said. "Knowing that the 4-H program had a hand in educating a young mind is very exciting and rewarding."



Get Up, Get Green! - 7th Annual East Austin Garden Fair

The 7th annual East Austin Garden Fair was held on April 20. The fair, presented by AgriLife Extension, the Travis County Master Gardeners Association and the City of Austin, took place at Zaragoza Park in Austin and drew more than 400 participants from throughout Austin and Travis County.

This year’s theme was “Get Up, Get Green!” Fair partners included the Sustainable Food Center, Alliance for African American Health in Central Texas, Home Depot, Capital Area Food Bank, Treehouse and AgriLife Extension’s Travis County Master Wellness volunteers.

“This fun, hands-on fair involved community members in creative, low-cost ways to grow food and ornamentals, improve their family diet and ‘green up’ their homes,” said Lindsay Razzaz, AgriLife Extension Horticulture Program Assistant for Travis County.

Razzaz said fair attendees got expert advice from Travis County Master Gardeners on gardening and composting, as well as information on other topics, including raising backyard chickens and bee-keeping.

“The fair featured many do-it-yourself activities and demonstrations, including garden planning, kids’ crafts, food pickling, building a rain barrel, produce tastings and building a container garden. “We also had SNAP registration counseling, including how to double benefits at farmers markets, along with cooking demonstrations. There were also free mini-classes held inside the Parque Zaragoza Recreation Center throughout the day, with materials available in English and Spanish.”



Beef Cattle & Brush Control Workshop

AgriLife Extension offices in Bastrop and Travis presented a Beef Cattle and Brush Management Workshop on June 27 in String Prairie. More than 75 people involved in or supporting the beef-cattle industry attended the workshop.

Topics addressed at the workshop included brush control products and application methods, a cattle market update and outlook, critical issues facing the beef industry, hornfly control and marketing options for beef producers.

AgriLife Extension speakers included Bob Lyons, Range Specialist, Uvalde; Dr. Mark Welch, Economist, College Station; Dr. Rick Machen, Livestock Specialist, Uvalde, and Sonja Swiger, Entomologist, College Station. Other speakers included Pati Jacobs, Bastrop Cattle Company, and Bob Rose, Lower Colorado River Authority Meteorologist.

“We received really good response to this workshop,” said Julie Ansley, Texas AgriLife Extension Service agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources in Travis County. “Dr. Lyons presentation on brush management was very well received by attendees, and Dr. Machen provided some great information that could be directly applied to beef cattle operations.”

Ansley said the workshop informed property operators and owners that certain chemicals would no longer be available next year, while also providing the mixing ratios for the latest chemicals recommended by AgriLife Extension. Other issues addressed were management during the drought and local market opportunities for grass-fed beef.



Keep Austin Wired - Robotics Event

The 4-H and Urban Youth Development program of AgriLife Extension in Travis County held ‘Keep Austin Wired’ events April 12 and April 19 – one at Hart Elementary School and the other at Rodriguez Elementary School. A total of more than 80 students and others participated in the two events.

“The 2012-2013 school year was the first year that our 4-H CAPITAL program of AgriLife Extension in Travis County included robotics in its after-school curriculum offering,” said Lydia Domaruk, AgriLife Extension agent for Urban Youth Development in Travis County.

Domaruk said fifth-grade students from seven Austin Independent School District schools -- Hart, Barrington, Brown, Langford, Pickle, Rodriguez, and Widen -- spent two semesters building, testing and evaluating various types of robots and exploring robotics technologies for the event.

“We wanted the students to not only experience a friendly competition where they could display their work, but have a fun way to celebrate all that they had accomplished in their robotics classes,” she said.

The Keep Austin Wired event on April 12 was for schools in South Austin, while the April 19 event was for North Austin schools. “Through Keep Austin Wired, students not only learned about robotics, science and engineering, but also about working toward goals and sportsmanship,” Domaruk said.

Most event attendees were students, but parents, younger siblings, teachers and administrators also came to watch and participate in some of the activities, she said.

“About 40 attended each event, where there were a variety of activities and competitions for students,” Domaruk said. “Each child or team could choose between LEGO Mindstorm robot racing, battlebots, the robocup drawbot building station or creative design challenge.”

She said at the South Austin event, guest presenters from the Westlake High FIRST robotics team demonstrated their competition robot to students and showed them how they might stay involved with robotics as they get older.

Representatives from Intel also were on hand to talk with students about careers in STEM – science, technology, engineering and math – and share

their experiences working in in the field of science and engineering.

“At these events, children took pride in their work, regardless of whether or not they won a ribbon,” Domaruk said. “Keep Austin Wired also gave students an opportunity to have fun and explore various types of creative engineering projects. It was a great success, and it was exciting to see all of the effort that these students put into their creations.”



Photo: 4-H CAPITAL students are competing in a green energy challenge with their LEGO Mindstorm robots.

MEET THE STAFF: Sonia Coyle, County Extension Agent-Family & Consumer Sciences



Sonia Coyle began her new role as Travis County Extension Agent for Family and Consumer Sciences on July 8.

Coyle has a master’s degree of science in education from Baylor University, and obtained a B.S. in Human Nutrition from the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

She has worked in the area of nutrition and health education for over ten years. Her experience includes working with AVANCE, Inc., Keep It Healthy, the Capital Area Food Bank, and the Texas Department of Health and Human Services-WIC program.