

Enhancing Our Horticulture

East Austin Garden Fair

The East Austin Garden Fair is Extension's annual horticulture event that specifically reaches out to our low-income and minority neighbors, a non-traditional audience for horticulture programming. The event was collaborative



between all Travis County faculty, and focused especially on the connection between gardening and nutrition. Since family health is a major motivator for gardening and consuming more fresh

produce, this collaboration was a natural fit and truly exhibited Extension's strength across content areas. For example, Master Wellness Volunteers did a seasonal produce tasting, and taught fairgoers about the benefits of eating home-grown or locally-grown foods and community partner Capital Area Food Bank's SNAP registration counselors then talked to interested fairgoers about SNAP eligibility and the application process. In order to connect with new audiences, we sent our press release to various family and eco-centered local blogs, as well as to many of the local "free fun" calendar web sites. As a result, we had more families and children than ever in the seven year history of this event. We also reached out to our deaf community and had interpreters to accompany the 17 deaf participants around the fair. With over 450 attendees, this was our largest fair since 2008.

Junior Master Gardener Programs

JMG (Junior Master Gardener) programs were conducted at 18 locations, with 4,014 youth participating in hands-on educational lessons. Youth and volunteers learned how to build, plant and maintain school and community gardens. The JMG program also promotes community gardening as a fun and productive form of physical activity for all ages. 90.5% of students surveyed agreed that it is important to serve their community, while 85.7% agreed that they could make a difference in their community after participating in this program.



STRONG STARTS Urban Farming Program

The transformation towards local agriculture is clearly underway in Central Texas. With this focus on fresh foods and sustainability, many Central Texans are transforming yards into gardens, some complete with fruit trees, layer chickens, and honey bees. Rising in step with this local food movement is some residents' foray into producing food for sale through sustainable or organic farming operations. Recognizing this trend, Extension has created educational programs to meet the need for information on growing and producing crops.

STRONG STARTS: Urban Farming 101 provides local producers with A-Z instruction in small farm business management. Extension is uniquely suited to deliver the highest caliber of research-based educational outreach, and to directly connect producers with public resources and emerging opportunities. Extension Specialists and Economists traveled from across the state to teach STRONG STARTS participants everything from farm business planning and budgeting to Central Texas crop selection and cultivation strategies. Local farmers, agency representatives, and industry practitioners joined to share research, advice, and experiences with participant farmers. Twenty-two participants attended the entire four-week series of classes, for a total of 38 hours of training. Participants completed a post-program evaluation survey that provided the following results:

- 88% will develop a business and marketing plan.
- 100% plan to evaluate their property's soil, climate and water-use.
- 100% plan to use sustainable/ environmentally responsible production practices.
- \$57.00 per acre was the average expected economic benefit of this program, for a total of savings of \$103,400.

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TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION



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COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Cooperative Extension Program



Making a Difference 2013

Extension Education in Travis County

Travis County is located in the heart of Texas and is home to the State Capitol. According to the 2012 Census estimate, 1,095,584 people call Travis County home, an increase of seven percent since 2010. Our growing, urban population includes a diverse demographic of 50% White; 34% Hispanic; 9% Black; 6% Asian; and 1% American Indian.

The Extension program in Travis County is part of the statewide Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Prairie View A&M University Cooperative Extension Program. It is linked with Texas county governments and the national Cooperative Extension System. Extension values and promotes citizen and community involvement, scientifically-based education, lifelong learning and volunteerism. We are pleased to provide you with this 2013 annual report showcasing a variety of our educational activities in Travis County.

Improving Our Health

Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program

EFNEP offers practical lessons in basic nutrition, food preparation, food budget management and food safety to young families and youth most at risk from hunger and food insecurity. During 2013, EFNEP staff enrolled 667 families and 5,140 youth in a series of classes. Upon completion, 99% increased consumption of at least one food group; and 87% improved one or more nutrition practices such as using the "Nutrition Facts" on food labels to make healthier food choices.

Studies have shown that for every \$1 spent on EFNEP, \$10 was estimated to be saved in health care costs and \$2 saved in food costs by participants. **For Travis County, this is \$3.1 million in estimated health care cost savings and almost \$622,506 in food costs.**



Chronic Disease Prevention Program

In Travis County, 21% of adults are obese, and 35% of children from low-income families are overweight/obese. Zip codes with high concentrations of individuals with chronic disease risk factors were targeted for educational programs that reached 745 participants. Health and wellness surveys addressing changes in behavior and knowledge were completed by 65 program participants (n=77.4%):

- 50.8% understood the connection to extra weight and chronic disease.
- 49.2% knew the difference between a portion and a serving.
- 36.9% understood the importance of physical activity.

2013 Educational Outreach

Educational Programs Presented: **6,038**
Attendance at Educational Programs: **108,293**
Individual Contacts: **297,870**
Volunteers Involved: **2,055**
47,817 Volunteer Hours
Valued at **\$1,058,668***

*Hourly value of volunteer time, provided by Independent Sector

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, Acts of Congress of May 8, 1914, as amended, and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. Dr. Douglas Steele, Director, the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

Better Living for Texans

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

386 programs were conducted in 2013, with 8,332 SNAP eligible individuals and families participating. Using “hands-on” experiences, BLT participants completed a series of lessons focusing on meal planning, stretching food dollars, decreasing fat and sodium consumption, and adopting selected behaviors that can reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

As a result of participating in BLT programs, the following behavior changes were achieved:

- 78% reported using the information about FAT on the food label when shopping, a 36% increase over pretest results.
- 74% reported always using a list when shopping for food, a 32% increase.
- 74% reported storing food immediately after a meal, instead of leaving food out, a 39% increase.

Dinner Tonight!

AgriLife Extension initiated the Dinner Tonight! program which promotes family meal-times, healthy meal planning tactics, food preparation techniques, and promotes Texas agriculture by sending out a weekly email with a video demonstrating one of the quick and healthy recipes that are archived on the Dinner Tonight! website (<http://healthyliving.tamu.edu>) with a link to download the recipe for free. The recipes include nutritional information and price per serving calculations. The recipes are cost effective, easy to prepare, and fit into a healthy meal plan.

705 Dinner Tonight! email recipients receive weekly video webcasts. An additional 39,650 were reached through TCTV-Channel 17, AISD monthly newsletters, UT Nutrition Department, and United Way of Greater Austin.

Developing Our Youth

Youth Leadership Program

The Youth Leadership program is designed for youth ages 12 to 18. The goal of this program is to help youth become more comfortable in developing and delivering speeches, learning how to implement hand gestures and voice inflection in their speaking, and peer evaluation. This is a joint program effort between Toastmasters and Travis County 4-H. Sixteen youth received 20 hours of instruction over a three-day period. One 4-H member also received \$7,500 in scholarships when he participated in Farm Bureau Speech Contests after completing this seminar.

4-H CAPITAL Builds Character

4-H CAPITAL strives to teach positive character development using the Connect with Character curriculum. All instructors teach the Six Pillars of Character: Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring, and Citizenship. In 2013, 3,368 contacts were made and 339 Character Counts sessions were led for a total of 692 hours of instruction. Across the board, the program positively impacted the youth’s attitudes.

Youth Science Experiment

Travis County 4-H was the recipient of a \$10,000 National 4-H Council Grant that was sponsored by the Philips Company through the Philips Cares Program. Travis County 4-H partnered with Hays and Guadalupe counties to offer a career day and to host the National Youth Science Experiment on Maps and Apps. Over 40 youth and adults from the three counties toured Philips and learned about careers in production, engineering, marketing, and sales.

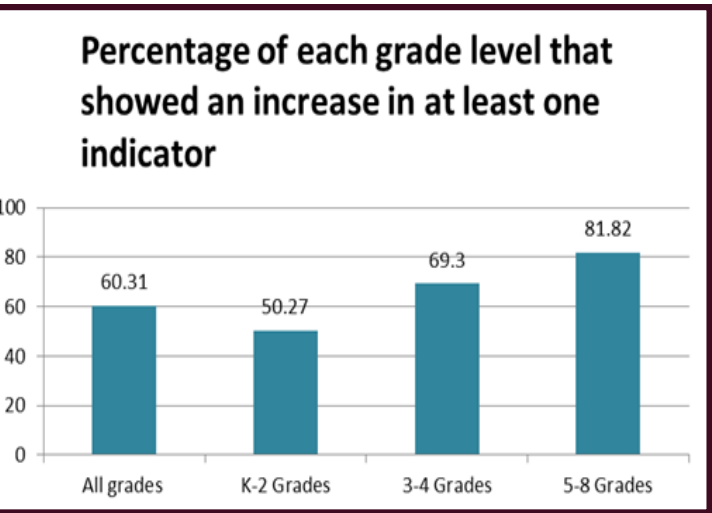
Over 200 youth participated in the National Youth Science Day Experiment conducted on October 9th. One event was conducted at the Philips facility in which three employees assisted with the Maps and Apps – create your own park utilizing a layering experiment. Several events were also conducted at local schools in Travis and Hays Counties. The youth were competitive in park designs and excited about the opportunity to be creative while learning the importance of GIS/GPS.



4-H CAPITAL After-School Science Programs

4-H CAPITAL engages youth in hands-on engineering and design to teach low-income youth 21st Century skills that they need to be successful. Programs focused on engineering and technology supplement learning during the school day by applying school day learning to real world experiences. Student projects included learning about animal behavior with small mammals, computer programming for a 3-D printer, building their own city, and much more.

2,707 youth participated in 4-H CAPITAL after school programs during 2013. Survey results below show an increase in at least one indicator, such as school engagement, interest in science, problem solving, etc.:

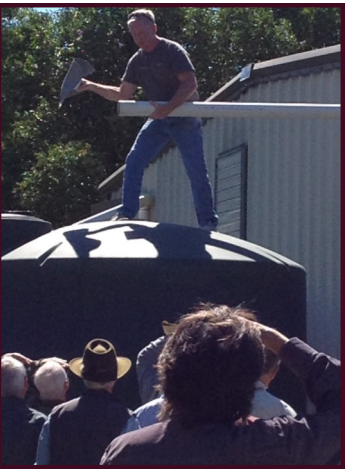


Supporting Our Agriculture

Winter Forage Program

In the late summer it is important for those with livestock to consider their pasture’s health. During an all-day program offered in cooperation with Bastrop County, 65 ranchers learned the benefits of soil testing, planting and maintaining winter forage, laws and regulations for restricted use chemicals. Attendees were made aware of the importance of herd health plans and encouraged to make a goal to keep better records. 100% of attendees said they had a better understanding of fertilization methods and needs, and 92% felt that information would provided a positive economic benefit to their ranch. One cattleman said “this was the best program I’ve been to in many years”.

Large Scale Rainwater Harvesting



Water is our most valuable natural resource and residents in the area are doing their best to start capturing our rainfall. Texas A&M Water Resource Specialist, Billy Kniffen delivered a hard hitting program about the capabilities of rainwater harvesting. He explained to the 45 participants that when they install their large-scale rainwater harvesting systems, they will have harvesting potential of 600 gallons for each inch of rainfall on a 1,000 square foot roof. Participants were land-

owners that were looking to install tanks larger than 500 gallons. Workshop attendees toured a landowner’s home that had the ability to hold up to 36,000 gallons of rainwater in tanks. Thanks to recent rainfall, the tanks were all full; creating much excitement for future plans. Of those that participated in the hands-on program, 85% will implement a large-scale rainwater harvesting system.

Beekeeping 101

The buzz is here to stay with the help of our local enthusiasts in the beekeeping community. A limited-registration class offered the chance for 30 starting beekeepers to hear from the experts and a few local beekeepers about what it takes to get started.

The program provided the basics of bee biology and behavior, tools of the trade and setting up your hive. The open interactive forum enabled participants to understanding exactly what it takes to start up a hive –both financially and physically. Individuals also learned about bee health and forage, and the new exciting options for agriculture valuation in Travis County by keeping bees! 100% of participants felt they strongly benefited from hearing extension personnel coupled with local beekeepers. Due to demand, additional programs will be scheduled for 2014.

Protecting Our Environment

Ground to Ground Program

Ground to Ground is a first-of-its-kind partnership program between Extension in Travis County and Compost Coalition, a local network continuing the use of business’ organic food waste. Ground to Ground is a city-wide program that diverts nutrient-rich coffee grounds from landfills and puts them back to work in the yards, farms, and gardens of Travis County. In this program, community members are encouraged to take home free buckets of coffee grounds for personal use. Grounds may also be taken to community garden “drop sites” across the city. Through community education and participation, Ground to Ground reclaims and maximizes the use of this ample, valuable organic material.



In 2013, over 8 tons of coffee grounds were diverted every month, for a total of almost 96 tons.

Ground to Ground supplies participating businesses with a bucket exchange system, marketing materials, employee training, and program support during the initial few months of participation. Ground to Ground also maps participating businesses online, so that community residents can find coffee grounds in their neighborhood. Travis County Master Gardeners play a key role in business’ successful transition into the program. They volunteer as “captains” for each coffee shop, serving as supportive store liaisons and providing important community outreach and education.

Coffee shop owners are very enthusiastic about Ground to Ground, saying that the program brings in new business, dramatically reduces the volume of their landfill waste, and stimulates environmental consciousness (and composting) among consumers and employees.

Community-wide Fire Ant Management

In 2002, Riggs et al showed that community wide fire ant management programs can help reduce red imported fire ant populations and reduce pesticide costs for community residents. By forming community wide programs for neighborhoods, fire ant reinfestation can be reduced or delayed.

Two community wide fire ant programs were continued in 2013. These programs cover over 1,800 acres and include over 1,400 homes. The mean reduction of pesticides after the program effort was 67%. The mean spent on fire ant control before and after community effort was \$45.52 and \$10.91 respectively, providing a mean savings of \$34.61.

Pesticide Applicator Licensing

Learning how to use pesticides safely and effectively, with minimal effect on the environment is important. Pesticide applicator licensing is regulated by the Texas Department of Agriculture. AgriLife Extension partners extensively with the TDA in providing educational programs for individuals wishing to obtain their pesticide applicator license. In 2013, Extension provided the four-hour required training program to 149 participants.