

## Leadership Advisory Board

### Travis County

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Lydia Steinman  
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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

### January 2015

14-17 Travis County Youth Show  
17-18 Home & Garden Show Master Gardner Seminars  
19 MLK Day Observed - OFFICE CLOSED  
22 & 27 Master Wellness Volunteer Program Training  
28 Extension in the City Briefing  
31 Growing Fruit in Your Home Garden Program

### February 2015

7 All About Roses Program  
10 Last Chance CEU Program I  
11 Presidents' Day Observed - OFFICE CLOSED  
12 Last Chance CEU Program II  
12 Dealing with Drought - Landscaping Basics  
16 Turfgrass Ecology Workshop  
21 4-H CAPITAL National Youth Science Day Celebration  
23 Pesticide Applicator Training  
26 Leadership Advisory Board meeting  
26 4-H CAPITAL Animal Science Program Banquet

### March 2015

14-28 Star of Texas Fair & Rodeo  
25 4-H Day at the Capitol

### April 2015

11 Passion for Plants - East Austin Garden Fair  
13 Texas Community Futures Forum  
30 Leadership Advisory Board meeting

TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION



PRAIRIE VIEW  
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COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE  
AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Cooperative Extension Program

In Cooperation With...

TRAVIS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' COURT

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County Judge

Ron Davis  
Commissioner, Precinct 1

Brigid Shea  
Commissioner, Precinct 2

Gerald Daugherty  
Commissioner, Precinct 3

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### EDITORIAL TEAM

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Angela Reyes  
Administrative Assistant

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Prairie View A&M University Cooperative Extension Program are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status.

TEXAS A&M  
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AND HUMAN SCIENCES  
Cooperative Extension Program

# Making a Difference

WINTER 2015

in Travis County



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

### Message from the Director:

2014 was a very exciting year for Extension programs across the nation as we celebrated our 100 year anniversary of providing research-based education to the citizens of Texas.

As we look back on 2014, I want to thank the Travis County Extension staff, as well as the many members of our volunteer organizations, including Master Gardeners, Master Wellness, Financial Literacy, and 4-H Adult Leader Volunteers who diligently support our efforts. Together, we made more than 433,470 educational contacts throughout Travis County. We also trained and involved 1,786 volunteers who gave back 47,967 volunteer hours to our communities, representing a value of over \$1,081,650 million dollars.\*

I would also like to thank our Leadership Advisory Board and our many other community partners and stakeholders for their guidance, leadership and support throughout the year. As well as the assistance we receive from our county and state governments who continue to support our agency and its growing outreach to an increasingly urban audience.

Best Wishes,

-Dolores Sandmann

\*Hourly value of volunteer time provided by  
[independentsector.org](http://independentsector.org)

## AgriLife Extension program helps farmers and ranchers understand New Farm Bill

A program to help farmers and ranchers better understand the new Farm Bill, offered by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service offices in Travis and Williamson counties, was held Nov. 17 at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Taylor. The program was presented by AgriLife Extension economist Dr. Jason Johnson of Stephenville. Ninety-two people from Travis, Williamson and surrounding counties attended.

"Emphasis was placed on crop insurance in the Farm Bill and a decision aid to help producers identify optimal and realistic insurance coverage levels to provide as much of a crop-loss safety net as possible," said Julie Zimmerman, AgriLife Extension agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources in Travis County.

Johnson explained general farm program provisions and addressed issues surrounding the new Farm Bill, including selection of the Price Loss Coverage, known as PLC, or Agricultural Risk Coverage, known as ARC. The presentation also covered base and yield update options available and identified what data would be needed to optimize the decision-making process. He also introduced attendees to an online decision-aid tool developed by the Agricultural and Food Policy Center at Texas A&M University and made available for use by agricultural producers.

"This Farm Bill is very different from before and has aspects that require that producers weigh options, think about what they might do long-term and obtain a good amount of data in order to make decisions about sign-up," Zimmerman said. Comments from program attendees included:

- "This program helped us gain a better understanding of what we need to do for the new process."
- "It's still going to be tough, but with help from AgriLife Extension and the Texas Farm Service Agency, we'll make it."

Zimmerman noted that several programs, such as the one in Taylor, were held throughout the state to help educate farmers and ranchers on the new Farm Bill and its provisions.





## Central Texas irrigation/turf management program helps professionals become 'Water Stars'

More than 50 turf and irrigation professionals attended the Central Texas Irrigation/Turf Maintenance Workshop on Oct. 22 at the Creedmoor Community Center, presented in conjunction with the Water Star program of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

The workshop was held in response to ongoing critical water issues in Central Texas, said Daphne Richards, AgriLife Extension horticulturist for Travis County. Extension developed the Water Star program to address water conservation and water quality education for area green industry professionals.

"Though materials presented were targeted at turf and irrigation professionals, anyone interested was welcome to attend," Richards said. "Attendees included grounds maintenance professionals, landscape and irrigation contractors and retail nursery/green industry personnel."

Presentations addressed irrigation scheduling, efficient irrigation practices and turf grass selection and cultural practices, and water management for sports fields. Instructors were from AgriLife Extension, Irrigator Training LLC in San Marcos and the Lower Colorado River Authority, sharing technologies and best practices to conserve water and survive drought.

"Landscape irrigation in Texas accounts for 40 to 60 percent of the total residential water use during peak hot/dry months of June to September," she said. "In addition, Texans maintain over two million acres of turf and use over 1.37 trillion gallons of water annually in municipalities. We also apply an estimated 2 million tons of fertilizers and another 71 to 78 million pounds of pesticides in the home landscape."

Richards said as Texas' population increases as its water resources decrease, educational programs to conserve water in the urban environment and to reduce the risk of surface and ground water contamination are gravely needed. She said a survey of program attendees indicated 93 percent would probably or definitely use irrigation scheduling to improve water-use efficiency; 92 percent would use the most water-efficient turf species for the area; and 90 percent would use a seasonal irrigation schedule. Additionally from 83 to 88 percent said they would probably or definitely manage cultural practices to increase water-use efficiency in turf; utilize irrigation evaluations/audits to improve water-use efficiency; install rain and freeze sensors to an existing irrigation system; and use a "cycle and soak" method to prevent water loss and runoff.

## Extension community wide effort takes a Bite out of Fire Ants

In 2005, residents of Wood Glen in Round Rock approached Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service to assist them in organizing a neighborhood-wide fire ant management program. The neighborhood consists of 525 homes spread over 224 acres along with common areas for a swimming pool, tennis courts and playground equipment, plus several green belt areas with walking trails.

"I have continued the program now for 10 years evolving with the neighborhood and program to find what works best," said Wizzie Brown, AgriLife Extension entomologist, Travis County. "To my knowledge, this is the longest continuous community wide fire ant project in the U.S."

Brown said initially AgriLife Extension provided baiting for the front yard and common areas within the neighborhood in the spring and fall, along with monitoring and education.

"The program has evolved to having common areas and front yards baited by a hired pest management company that is paid through homeowner association dues," she said. "A backyard bait was made available to participating residents during a fire ant education day, and articles on fire ants, fire ant management and bait use were sent to residents throughout the year."

Of the 525 homes within the neighborhood, 521 participated in the front yard baiting. Fire ant activity was monitored in the neighborhood both before and after the spring and fall baiting -- a total of 4 monitoring times at each location -- and a satisfaction survey was provided to participants during the education day.

Survey responses showed residents spent less on pesticides for fire ant control, reduced the amount of pesticide used and thought the program moderately to greatly reduced human health risk. Eighty-five percent said that the fire ant program has moderately to greatly improved their family's quality of life.

"Community wide fire ant programs are a wonderful tool for neighborhoods to utilize for controlling imported fire ants and the problems they cause," Brown said. "Participants in the Wood Glen program have said they enjoy that the program allows neighbors to work together, that it is convenient and, most importantly, that it works!"



## 4-H CAPITAL Project holds Natural Resource skill-a-thons at three Travis County middle schools

On December 9, 10 and 11 the Travis County 4-H CAPITAL Project held "Exploring Your Environment" skill-a-thons at three middle schools in the Del Valle Independent School District. Funding for this program held in conjunction with Del Valle ISD was provided through a Disney Education Grant from the National 4-H Council.

"These skill-a-thon events helped 11 afterschool clubs culminate a semester's worth of learning about natural resources," said Lydia Domaruk, AgriLife Extension agent, Urban Youth Development, with the 4-H CAPITAL Project in Travis County. "During the events, students gave presentations to their peers on topics that ranged from water quality and the three R's -- reduce, reuse and recycle -- to wind energy, rainwater catchment systems and oil spills. Each middle school hosted two or more elementary school clubs at their site for the event."

Domaruk said each group was rated on the skill, accuracy and quality of their presentations. At the end of the day, all teams competed in the Natural Resources Quiz Bowl, a question-and-answer contest relating to what they had learned during that day's presentations.

"These skill-a-thons not only gave youth an opportunity to share what they had learned with others, but also allowed them to engage in an environment charged with excitement around learning with their peers," she said. "These future scientists worked hard during the semester, and had a lot of fun celebrating their hard work with other 4-H youth on different campuses."

AmeriCorps instructor Natalie Elorza-Welling, who works with students at Creedmoor Elementary School said: "For young, budding children, participating in a skill-a-thon competition is both exciting and daunting. The event in Del Valle involved students educating each other in smaller groups about natural resource topics, followed by a hands-on science activity and Jeopardy!-style quiz bowl."



## 4-H Program Squares Off Against Bullying

Conflicts among youth have been increasing and, as a result, school districts have been mandated by the Texas Legislature to adopt and implement a dating violence policy and a discipline management policy.

"These mandates require training for teachers and staff as well as training and curriculum for youth to address these issues," said Nathan Tucker, Prairie View A&M University Cooperative Extension Program agent for 4-H in Travis County. "There is no standard curriculum being utilized by school districts, but Texas 4-H in partnership with the Texas Rural Mediation Services developed the *Take a Stand!* curriculum to address this tough issue."

Tucker said the purpose of the program is to educate youth on positive ways to deal with conflict and to decrease incidents of discipline referrals in schools. He said Travis County is one of seven Texas counties selected to pilot the curriculum and provide feedback through evaluations by the program's target audience -- third, fourth and fifth grade students. The curriculum is correlated to the TEKS which helped teachers see how they could integrate the program into their required curriculum.

*Take A Stand!* in Travis County is a collaborative effort between Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Prairie View A&M Cooperative Extension Program and the 4-H CAPITAL program, Tucker explained. In 2014, Travis County 4-H staff had a goal of reaching 750 youth.

Total efforts so far this year between all three 4-H agents in Travis County have reached 1,376 youths, including 962 in the target grade age group and have yielded a total of 745 surveys," Tucker said. A series of lessons were provided at the following locations -- Austin ISD, Manor ISD, Pflugerville ISD, YMCA, and Austin Parks and Recreation sites.

For additional information about the *Take A Stand!* program, go to the Texas 4-H website at: [texas4-h.tamu.edu/take\\_stand/](http://texas4-h.tamu.edu/take_stand/)

