

Enhancing Our Horticulture

East Austin Garden Fair

The East Austin Garden Fair is an annual event offered each spring. The focus of this year's fair was "edible landscaping." Many people do not have the space or the time to invest in a large garden, but that shouldn't



stop them from planting a few easy-to-grow vegetables. The goal was to educate the community on integrating vegetables into small areas of the landscape, or even grow them in containers on a patio. Over 200 people attended the garden fair in 2011, where they were able to visit booths, see demonstrations, and gather information on edible landscaping, proper irrigation and soil amendments for food crops, how to grow tomatoes and other vegetables, as well as rainwater harvesting, backyard chickens, worm composting, and gardening with children. Each year, participants are given a free plant if they visit every booth, and this year's give away was a tomato plant.

Master Gardener Program

Each autumn 30 to 35 people are chosen, from approximately 100 applicants, to be trained as Master Gardener volunteers. After their 12-week intensive horticulture training, participants become Master Gardener Interns and are required to volunteer for Extension by training community residents on various gardening, landscaping and environmental best practices.

In 2011, this volunteer corps contributed almost 13,000 hours of community service, representing a benefit of almost \$277,000 to Travis County (current per hour value of volunteer time of \$21.36, from independentsec-

tor.org). Volunteer projects include answering phone, drop-in and email gardening questions, hosting educational booths at various community events, offering an educational garden tour, providing presentations upon request, offering twice-monthly free seminars on timely horticultural topics, providing consultations to schools and other community groups on establishing gardens, and many other valuable efforts.

Supporting Our Agriculture

Rainwater Harvesting Workshop

Rainwater harvesting has been the focus of many environmentally-forward thinkers for quite some time, and it continues to be an important method of sustaining the availability of our natural resources. And after Central Texas experienced the worst drought and hottest summer on record, the importance of rainwater harvesting has only increased. Efficient water-use is increasingly important to Texas, and with the state's growing population and limited supply of both ground and surface sources, we must use water wisely. In response to this important issue, nine presentations were offered and one all-day workshop was held, with a total of 512 participants. In addition, consultations were given at three schools that installed extensive rainwater harvesting systems.

Pesticide Applicator Licensing

It is of paramount importance for those wishing to use pesticides know how to do so safely and effectively, with minimal effect on the environment. Pesticide applicator licensing is regulated by the Texas Department of Agriculture. The Texas AgriLife Extension Service partners extensively with the TDA in many areas, including providing educational programs for individuals wishing to obtain their pesticide applicator license.

Information on pesticide laws and regulations, integrated pest management strategies, safe use and handling of pesticides, and how to deal with particular pests (animal, plant, and disease) is presented at these monthly programs. In 2011, Extension offered the four-hour required training program 10 times, with a total of 61 participants.

For more information, contact:

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Extension Education in Travis County

2011

Making a Difference

Developing Our Youth

Get Ready Program—Youth Learn Leadership Skills

Get Ready is a new initiative proposed by Austin Independent School District for 6th graders from Harris, Winn and Pecan Springs Elementary schools. 15 youth from each of the three schools were selected to participate. Get Ready is designed as a preparatory program to help youth become more equipped to graduate high school, develop their leadership skills, and increase their understanding of county government and how it functions.

Space Camp

This summer 4-H CAPITAL instructors led Space-themed lessons at eleven Austin ISD and Del Valle ISD summer camp programs, reaching 536 youth. The program corresponded academically with the students Science TEKS standards for the school year.

National 4-H Week

The 4-H CAPITAL Project celebrated National 4-H Week (Oct. 3 – 7) in a big way! Our youth participated in One Day 4-H — the state-wide 4-H day of service, and National Youth Science Day.

During One Day 4-H our kids wrote 340 letters of support to the young victims of the Bastrop County fires. 4-Hers learned about the disaster and how it affected the Bastrop communities. They also worked with their instructors to learn about fire safety and how they can prevent wildfires in their areas and stay safe in the event of a disaster. The children then make homemade games and puzzles, drew pictures, and even donated gently used toys and books to accompany their letters. The letters were distributed to the children at Lost Pines Elementary school who lost their homes.

For National Youth Science Day, 257 4-H'ers participated in a nation-wide science experiment on wind energy. Students created their own wind turbines and meas-

The Extension program in Travis County is part of the statewide Texas AgriLife Extension Service and the Cooperative Extension Program at Prairie View A&M University. It is a member of The Texas A&M University System and 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.

Our Extension programs in Travis County provide residents with relevant, research based information and services to improve individual health, wellness and family stability, promote agriculture, develop leadership life skills for youth, protect our natural resources, and develop strong communities. In the midst of challenging economic times, and drought related issues, Extension provides an outstanding return investment by leveraging funding through grants, strategic partnerships, and extensive use of volunteers. We are pleased to provide you with this 2011 annual report of our educational activities in Travis County as we respond to the unique needs of our dynamic urban area.

- *Dolores Sandmann*
County Extension Director

2011 Educational Outreach

Educational Programs Presented: **4,574**
Attendance at Educational Programs: **97,624**
Individual Contacts: **180,620**
Volunteers Involved: **1,269**
36,543 Volunteer Hours
Valued at **\$780,558***

*Hourly value of volunteer time, provided by Independent Sector

Educational programs of the Texas 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. Edward G. Smith, Director, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, the Texas A&M System.

 **AgriLIFE EXTENSION**
Texas A&M System



Cooperative Extension Program
Prairie View A&M University

ured their energy output. 4-H CAPITAL kids at 21 different Austin and Del Valle Elementary Schools participated.

Program Expansion and Success

4-H CAPITAL is growing! We expanded our programs to include five additional Elementary Schools in AISD and the Texas Empowerment Academy, a charter school Middle School. This allowed us to serve an additional 170 students in after-school programs throughout the city, bringing our total to over 1,800 students served during the 2010-2011 school year.

- 4-H CAPITAL 5th graders scored, on average, 3.5% higher on their Science TAKS scores than their peers in 2011.
- 4-H CAPITAL 5th graders scored, on average, 11% higher on their Reading TAKS scores.

4-H’ers Earn Scholarships

June 13, 2011 – Hard Work and dedication paid off for four youth from Travis County who received scholarships through the Texas 4-H Foundation. A total of \$43,000 was earned between the four 4-H members. An additional \$13,500 in scholarships was given by local sponsors.



Travis County 4-H Leaders 4 Life Team takes 1st at State 4-H Roundup. This contest consists of four components; a mock meeting (utilizing formal parliamentary procedure), a Q&A session over parliamentary procedure, quiz bowl (4-H History and leadership knowledge) and a service learning project-where they collected over 550 personal hygiene items and \$190.00 for Front Steps in Austin. The team earned a trip to compete at the 2012 National Western 4-H Roundup in Denver, Colorado.

Strengthening Our Families

Financial Literacy Education Makes a Real Difference

The recent economic downturn and resulting recession have heightened consumer awareness of the need for fi-

nancial literacy education. The Financial Literacy Coalition of Central Texas (FLCCT) was founded by Texas AgriLife Extension - Travis County to be a leading, trusted, unbiased and credible source of personal financial education. 118 programs were conducted by trained volunteer instructors in 2011, with 1,851 clientele participating.

Improving Our Health

**Better Living for Texans
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**

437 programs were conducted in 2011, with 11,918 SNAP eligible individuals and families participating. Using “hands-on” experiences, BLT participants completed a series of lessons on improving eating habits for breakfast, dinner and snacking; and utilized the Nutrition Facts Label as a tool when buying food.

- As a result of participating in BLT programs, the following dietary quality results were achieved:
- 89% reported using the Nutrition Facts label to determine fat content when shopping for food, a 53% increase over pre-test results.
 - 85% reported using the Nutrition Facts Label to determine serving size or portion control, a 62% increase.
 - 86% reported using the Nutrition Facts Label to determine sodium content when shopping for food, a 57% increase

BLT Success Story:
“I buy more fresh products than products that are already made. I try to compare different brands by reading the labels and getting the one that is the healthiest and by me doing this I have been able to lose 10 pounds.”
-Bentura A.

Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program

During 2011, 1,436 adults enrolled in an EFNEP seven-part series. In a 24 hour food recall evaluation, 98% had a positive change in at least one food group, and 33% reported positive changes in physical activity. Additionally, 82% improved food resource management practices (plans meals, compares prices, uses grocery lists), 93% improved nutrition practices (reads nutrition labels, makes healthy food choices), and 71% improved food safety practices such as thawing and storing foods properly. 6,606 children from 251 different groups enrolled in the EFNEP Youth program. Evaluations indicate that 84% of the youth participants now eat a variety of foods. 90% increased their knowledge of the essentials of human nutrition. 85% increased their ability to select low-cost, nutritious foods. 91% improved food preparation and safety practices, and 96% improved physical activity behavior or attitude.

Walk Across Texas! Increases Physical Activity

Community-wide programs like *Walk Across Texas!* have been strongly associated with significant increases in physical activity. This program reached the following participants in Travis County during 2011. . .

- 5,296 total adults participated on 313 teams.
- 16 agencies/groups participated.
- 3,520 adults finished the 8-week program logging 374,246.35 miles.
- Teams walked 451 times across Texas.



\$49,707,077 million dollars could be saved in potential lifetime health care costs and lost wages for 2011 Walk Across Texas! participants.

Economic Impact of WAT— Medical research shows that exercise and weight loss can permanently or temporarily delay the onset of Type 2 diabetes in 58 percent of people.

751 WAT participants (22%) could prevent the onset of diabetes through increased physical activity over their lifetime.

Project DEAP (Diabetes Education Awareness Prevention)

Diabetes was the sixth leading cause of death in Texas in 2002-2007. In 2007, **5,105** deaths were directly attributed to diabetes. In Travis County, diabetes is the leading cause of death for African Americans (47.2%), Hispanics (45.8%), and whites (15.1%).

Project DEAP outreach was conducted primarily in 78702 and 78723 zip codes. Educational programming focuses on awareness, prevention, and lifestyle changes. Diabetes classes and activities were conducted at senior activity centers, faith based institutions, apartments for seniors, and community centers. Respondents had a good understanding of diabetes (60%), awareness of family history and diabetes (58%), and inactivity (62%) as risk factors for diabetes. There was also an awareness of the connection to diet and blood sugar control (65%) and the need to use less salt, sugar, and fat (66%) when preparing food.

Whereas the literature is replete with the importance of physical activity and diabetes management, respondents had inactive lifestyles (79%). At least 50% of participants had a good understanding of damage to the body with uncontrolled diabetes. Actions to be taken as a result of outreach include: sharing information with family

and friends (34%); reading food labels (38%); using portion control (44%); and eating more fruits and vegetables (49%). Comments include: *“given me a deeper understanding of the seriousness of complications associated with diabetes,” “good information, very helpful for people who are not diabetic to keep a check,” “started working out most days of the week and try to put a control on diet,” and “made me understand diabetes better and to be careful... helped me to talk about it more to other people.”*

Additionally, outreach included newsletters, flyers, and public service announcements (1100); the annual St. Patrick’s Diabetes Dance (200 participants from five senior centers); health awareness symposiums (188 participants); and free health screenings for blood pressure and blood pressure (84).

Protecting Our Environment

Community-wide Fire Ant Management

Two neighborhoods, Belterra and Wood Glen, in Central Texas participate in community-wide fire ant management programs that are monitored by Texas AgriLife Extension Service. Riggs, et al in 2002 showed that community-wide fire ant management programs can help reduce fire ant populations and reduce pesticide costs for community residents. Treating yards, greenbelts and common areas in communities can reduce or delay re-infestation of fire ants. The Wood Glen program has been ongoing since 2005 while the Belterra has been carried out since 2008.

ISEC Home Pest Management Program with Austin Habitat for Humanity 2011

The ISEC Home Pest Management Program teaches clientele to identify common household pests and to prevent potential pest problems in the home, usually without using pesticides. ISEC increases awareness of IPM principles and concepts and reduces exposure to pesticides by teaching alternative and least toxic methods for pest management. The ISEC program also stresses the importance of proper pesticide use and disposal which will help reduce the amount of pesticides entering water resources.

The ISEC Home Pest Management Program was provided to partner families of the Austin Habitat for Humanity Program. The program director translated the program into Spanish for non-English speakers. Each family got to take home an "IPM kit" that includes information on 10 specific pests as well as tools such as steel wool, glue boards, caulk, etc. to allow families to utilize IPM strategies in lieu of pesticides.