HARRIS COUNTY QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 21, ISSUE 1











Extension Education in Harris County

Howdy and Welcome to Harris County!

OUR WORK MAKES A DIFFERENCE. IN THE LIVES OF TEXANS AND ON THE ECONOMY.

Vision: Help Texans better their lives.

Mission: Through the application of science-based knowledge, we create high quality, relevant continuing education that encourages lasting and effective change.

Capabilities: We provide programs, tools, and resources local & statewide that teach people how to improve agriculture and food production, advance health practices, protect the environment, strengthen our communities, and enrich youth.

LET'S TALK: A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR







It's been over a year now since COVID-19 started changing the world as we know it. In just a few short weeks, our agency moved employees in a mass exodus from offices to work from their homes. For most of you, this move changed your work environment in a drastic way. However, your dedication and diligent work toward programming was never minimized.

I think we all can recite, without hardly a thought, all the negative things that the pandemic has triggered. But what about the positive things? We have spent more time with our family this year than we can even calculate. We have developed new partnerships, reached new audiences and transitioned to our very popular virtual educational programs.

I would like to personally thank our outstanding TEAM of administrative assistants, volunteers, interns, program assistants, program associates, county extension agents, extension agents, para-professionals and specialists for their outstanding work. Your ability to adapt and engage with our communities during these difficult times was challenging but definitely worthwhile.

To our partners, community leaders and county commissioner's court. I ask that you take a moment and read all of the outstanding accomplishments led by our extension team. What seemed to be impossible situations, have been overcome by all of us coming together to make solutions happen!

Respectfully,

David D. Wright County Extension Director – Harris County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service



Kids Kows



More

by Rashayla Johnson, Harris County 4-H Program Assistant

On March 25, 2021 and March 26, 2021, two "Kids, Kows, and More" events were held for McFee Elementary School in Katy and Davila Elementary School in Houston. The goal of a "Kids, Kows, and More" event is to help students and adults learn, understand, and appreciate where their food comes from, not just that they purchase them at the store.

At McFee elementary, a total of 430 students and 38 adults participated and learned where milk and other dairy products come from! At Davila Elementary, a total of 377 students and 27 adults participated and learned about dairy and bee keeping! The students were very happy to see Fiona the dairy cow!















Mission Possible Clover Kids

by Misha Chakraborty, Harris County 4-H Program Assistant

What is our idea of a model community? We expect our community to be safe from violence and illness, and we choose neighborhoods that are inclusive and synchronous. Most importantly, we want to be surrounded by caring people whom we trust. Texas A & M AgriLife Extension Service, Harris County plays a pivotal role in creating and maintaining our dream community. Successful collaborative efforts towards achieving the common goals are prevalent in our every attempt.

Building alliances for community growth and wellbeing were the impetus to start a Mission Possible Clover Kids project with Harris County homeschool students.

32 homeschool children were offered fashion basics classes, where the children learned about the important concept of fashion trends, and consumer decision-making, through fun activities. Students' essential skills, e.g. communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity are nurtured during the training as well.



MARS BASE CAMP

WRITTEN BY ZACHARY GIBLIN, HARRIS COUNTY 4-H & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM ASSISTANT

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
Service Harris County 4-H
department kicked off the year
working in partnership with the
YMCA, the Boys and Girls Club of
Greater Houston, and Girls, Inc
through the Imagine Science
Grant. The department has
provided virtual and in person
lessons, training staff of the
BGCGH and YMCA across the
greater Houston area to teach
youth through an interactive
virtual series, Mars Base Camp.

In this series, youth have been joining in and working together using the engineering process to design their Mars watch Towers, sketch prototypes of a Mars rover, and explore the surface of Mars through interactive games.



During this series, youth learn about current Mars missions, scientific facts and definitions associated with Mars, and talk about STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math) related career paths associated with space and planetary exploration. These youth will work to establish 4-H clubs within their organizations and continue with projects focused on STEM.

Imagine Science

by Jaden Kelly, Harris County 4-H Imagine Science Program Coordinator

4-H STEM Week is a ten-lesson series that was provided to eleven Boys and Girls Club sites in the Greater Houston area during the week of spring break, March 15-19, 2021. This program provided five gardening and five STEM focused activities to introduce youth that are historically underrepresented in the STEM field to these topics. This Spring Break Day Camp was organized by Jaden Kelly, Texas A&M Extension Service - Harris **County Imagine Science Program** Coordinator, Zachary Giblin, 4-H & Youth **Development Program Assistant, and Andres** Garcia, Senior Manager of Programs for Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Houston (GBCGH), through the Imagine Science program.

There were over 200 student participants who played a part in activities such as homemade catapults, slime, bottle rockets, pinecone bird feeders, seed germination necklaces, and more! This program shows how working in partnership with other youth serving organizations can increase the overall impact and success of youth programs in our community. By using Harris County 4-H program content, BGCGH members and staff, and assistance from the 4-H departments in Waller, Fort Bend, Galveston, and Warton County, the 4-H STEM Week program was able to maximize our reach to youth participants in our community without limiting the quality of our content.









4-H Member Jalyn Burkhalter



4-H Member Zane Potter

Livestock Shows

BY STEVEN FREDERICK, HARRIS COUNTY 4-H PROGRAM ASSOCIATE

In the past few months, Harris County youth have participated in multiple major shows in Texas. Some of the shows included The Patriot, San Angelo, San Antonio, Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, and Rodeo Austin. These youth raise some of the animal projects for 6 months to a year. These youth spend countless hours a day feeding, watering, exercising, cleaning their shelter/barn, and much more to be successful in the show ring. Throughout the caring process, I contact the families to make a project visit following CDC guidelines, giving advice to the youth to make their showing experience easier and not overwhelming when they enter the ring. The youth show by division/breed, and they compete with youth from all across the State of Texas.

After the youth show their animal, the judge evaluates either for breeding or market characteristics then places the class in order from left to right. Students with market animals that place in a top percentage are able to go to the sale. Students then have the opportunity to receive money towards next year's project, and potential scholarship opportunities to reach their college goals. These shows help the youth learn skills like time management, responsibility, communication, and much more. We would like to congratulate all of the youth who spent countless hours this year working through COVID-19 to show off their animals at the major shows.





Canine 4-H Project

BY BRITTNEY IVEY, HARRIS COUNTY 4-H AGENT

Each month the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Harris County 4-H youth have been challenged to either experience a new project or enhance one of their main projects. In the month of March, the Canine Project was highlighted for the county. Each month, materials are posted on the Harris County 4-H virtual classroom and the youth complete tasks to earn custom 4-H prizes.

The requirements for March were: 5 informational quizzes, 2 activities, and attend 1 training. Quizzes covered the 4-H State Dog Show rules, Dog Training, Dog Health, Dog Breeds, and Dog Anatomy. For the activities and trainings, the youth had options for those with and without dogs. The activities covered learning about common dog breeds, dog photography, dog IQ test, and dog training. All the activities were turned in virtually either by document presentation, video, or pictures. The participants reported having fun either learning about new dogs or sharing activities with their own dog. Many did not know there was a dog show, and these activities helped youth to get involved with the dog show in their upcoming years.

There were 3 different trainings offered that the youth could attend. The trainings covered the domestication of wolves, dog training for veterans, and seeing-eye dogs. The presentations were given by guest speakers in those fields. Each training had an attendance of 20-plus participants. After training #3, covering the seeing-eye dog, participants pointed out how much they had learned about these amazing dogs that assist those that cannot see well. The youth learned how they can volunteer, helping dogs at the puppy phase, and starting training, before the dogs go to an academy to learn to help those in need get around safely.

The program had 67 enrolled and 10 participants have completed the program in its entirety. Those who completed the program were awarded a customized water bottle for them or their dog and a Canine 4-H project pin.

WINTER STORM URI

BY SHANNON DIETZ, HARRIS COUNTY AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES AGENT

During recent Winter Storm Uri, Harris County
Agriculture & Natural Resources Agent, Shannon Dietz,
represented Texas A&M AgriLife Extension at the Harris
County Emergency Command Center, Transtar.
Shannon participated as part of the Texas Department of
Emergency Management Team on hand to aid and serve
as a point of contact for farmers and livestock producers
in Harris County and surrounding areas. His main duties
were to serve as a connection between the state supply
chain for agriculture in College Station and the agents in
the surrounding counties for emergency evacuations,
providing information on feed/hay distribution,
logistics, and weather updates.

In addition, information was shared with local county commissioners' offices with projected impacts that consumers would be facing at the grocery stores in the coming weeks because of damage incurred to vegetable and citrus crops throughout Texas.

Partners that were assisted with services provided by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension were; Harris County Sheriff's Office, SETRAC (Southeast Texas Regional Advisory Council), Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM), and Health and Hospitals. Shannon also provided daily morning and evening updates at the all-department briefings from Tuesday, February 16th through the 19th where he was stationed during the duration.

AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES



HARRIS COUNTY JUDGE LINA HIDALGO, HARRIS COUNTY AG AGENT SHANNON DIETZ





VIRTUAL PEST MANAGEMENT FOR GOLF AND SPORT TURF SYSTEMS

WRITTEN BY PAUL WINSKI, HARRIS COUNTY HORTICULTURE AGENT

The Virtual Pest Management for Golf and Sport Turf Systems is a one-day educational session presented by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension during the first quarter of 2021, in partnership with the South Texas Chapter of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA).

Pest management is an on-going battle in both golf course and sport turf fields. Golf course superintendents and athletic field managers need to stay up to date on the latest technologies and practices in order to provide a quality product for their customers/clientele. This program focused on trainings and strategies to aid in pest control management. The workshop included the following topics:

·Site-specific golf course management to reduce pesticide inputs
·Diagnosis of root-infecting diseases in warm season turf grasses
·An integrated approach to improving turf performance in shaded environments
·Pesticide laws & regulations update
·Drifting into weed control

5 Continuing Education Units were approved by the Texas Department of Agriculture. 81 people attended the workshop.

90% of the attendees that completed a post-workshop survey anticipate benefiting economically as a direct result of what they learned from this program

95% of respondents intend to apply the information presented during the training.

99% of respondents improved their understanding of the topics after attending the program.

The relationship between South Texas Chapter GCSAA and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension - Harris County continues to strengthen as these workshops/programs provide the educational information the superintendents and their employees need.



Harris County Master Gardener Association

BY BRANDI KELLER
HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Congratulations to the new Graduating Class! We had 21 members of the 2019 class graduate after fulfilling their required 60 service hours, with a class total of more than 2,100 hours. This service was completed all around Harris County at gardens, community centers, farmer's markets, public events, online events, plant sales and more. 2020 was a unique year, but we appreciate the contributions they made with all the adaptations that were required. We know they will all go on to contribute much more in 2021 as newly minted Certified Master Gardeners.

Master Gardeners are members of the local community who take an active interest in gardens and landscapes. They are trained by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension as volunteers to assist in the mission of providing research-based education in horticulture. They give lectures, answer gardening questions, conduct research, provide demonstration gardens, and share their knowledge with residents of Harris County. Through their passion of horticulture and education, we are able to extend our reach in ways we could never do without their contribution. Many thanks to all Harris County Master Gardeners for being a part of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.

Superior Service Award in Volunteerism

BY BRANDI KELLER, HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Harris County Master Gardener Program Coordinator - Brandi Keller, Harris County Horticulture Agent - Paul Winski, and our Harris County Master Gardeners received the agency's Superior Service Award in Volunteerism. This is an award that is given to recognize outstanding performance in education to Texas residents.

2020 marks the 36th anniversary of the Harris County Master Gardener Program. The ability to offer horticulture education to a population of 4.7 million, extends beyond the realm of two county agents and one coordinator, and having an effective volunteer base is critical. Master Gardeners have adapted to the constantly changing environment that Harris County has been subjected to in the last few years, such as the 2016 Tax Day Flood and Hurricane Harvey in 2017 that resulted in the destruction of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension -Harris County offices, demonstration gardens, greenhouse, and teaching facility. Despite these experiences and their personal losses, these incredible volunteers have continued to educate the public and improve the horticulture skills of the citizens of Harris County.

Since 2016, Harris County Master Gardener volunteers have reached close to 100,000 county residents and have donated more than 59,000 service hours. They have served in every precinct of Harris County at schools, public events, community centers, senior centers, public gardens, farmer's markets, garden clubs, and online. Additionally, they have been able to adapt public outreach during the Covid-19 pandemic by offering online programs that have increased reach as adults and families watched from home. The pandemic also brought about the transition to an online plant sale platform that enabled ordering from home with a contactless pickup. This recognition from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension is well-deserved. Many thanks to volunteers that have served as Master Gardeners in Harris County. Congratulations!





Harris County Master Gardener Program Coordinator, Brandi Keller Awarded 2020 Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Superior Service Award in Program Support

Brandi has been with Extension for four years in the role of Program Coordinator and has displayed consistent growth in outreach since 2017, yielding a 98% increase since 2017. Volunteers reached almost 80,000 county residents in that time and have donated more than 40,400 service hours. Managing the program consisted of planning and facilitating the Annual Master Gardener Volunteer Training Course and overseeing multiple outreach programs such as the Green Thumb Gardening Lecture Series, the Cylinder Garden Program, and Ask a Master Gardener. In addition, Brandi has also established collaborations with community partners where Master Gardeners regularly answer gardening questions at Mercer Botanic Gardens and maintain the Family Garden with 26+ vegetable, fruit, and herb beds in Hermann Park Conservancy's McGovern Centennial Gardens.

Soon after the onset of the pandemic, Brandi immediately transitioned the Green Thumb lecture series online in collaboration with the Harris County Public Library System and then with Houston Community College. She is also a speaker for the Horticulture Department's Home Grown Lecture Series, a weekly (then bi-weekly) virtual gardening series that provides education to the public and continuing education for volunteers.

With an estimated 250 volunteers each year, the Master Gardener Program continues to grow and adapt with changes that come our way in Harris County.





BETTER LIVING FOR TEXANS

BY HARRIS COUNTY BLT AGENTS LORA JORGENSEN & KRISTINA BROWN

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension- Better Living for Texans (BLT) program is funded by the USDA's SNAP-Ed Program and Food and Nutrition Service to bring research-based nutrition, health, and wellness education to SNAP-eligible residents.

On March 6th, Harris County BLT Agents Lora Jorgensen and Kristina Brown participated in a Computer Lab Inauguration event hosted by Indus Management at two residential living complexes, Sharpstown Garden Apartments and Tierra Bella Apartments. The event featured booths from many local education and health organizations, as well as a distribution of masks, sanitizers, school supplies, and senior meals. The Agents attended a table at the event and distributed literature focusing on MyPlate nutrition, food safety, and buying healthy foods on a budget. Educational material was distributed to approximately 150 contacts.

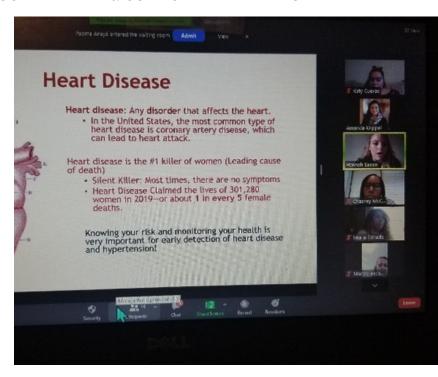
Councilman Edward Pollard, of Houston City Council District J, made an appearance at the event in support of the new computer facility. Mr. Pollard was presented with a BLT infographic highlighting 2019 participant data, BLT program literature, and useful items that are used for BLT program educational reinforcement.

FAMILY & COMMUNITY HEALTH

BY AMANDA KRIPPEL, HARRIS COUNTY FAMILY & COMMUNITY HEALTH AGENT

February is Heart Health Month!

On February 26th Family and Community Health Agent, Amanda Krippel along with UT Health Intern Hannah Eason gave an introductory virtual lesson, to the parents of Baker Ripley Head start Program, on the importance of maintaining a balanced diet and all other risk factors to avoid heart disease. The active group of fourteen participants enjoyed the lesson given in English and in Spanish and gained a better understanding of living heart healthy to reduce their risk of getting any type of cardiovascular disease.



Do you stress eat? Let's find out why!

Amanda Krippel, Harris County Family and Community Health Agent, gave a virtual presentation on Stress Eating in partnership with Collaborative for Children. The Houston Collaborative for Children is a non-profit organization that works with parents to lead the way in equitable early education for children. The presentation was given in both English and Spanish. The twenty-one parents in attendance gained an understanding of how coping with food is not always the best choice. Parents were given several strategies on reducing the tendency to stress eat.

Let's talk about...



- Stress eating (and why it happens)
- Foods commonly craved during stress eating
- Impact of stress eating
- Tips for reducing the urge to eat during stressful times



Wellness Wednesdays

by Dr. Sonja Davis, Harris County Extension Agent, FCH

The Family & Community Health Unit has continued to provide health and wellness presentations virtually during their Wellness Wednesday programming. In January, Harris County Fire Inspector Tom Petty presented information on Fall and Life Safety and Dr. Sonja Davis provided recommendations on "Revamping Your Resolutions" for those who were not successful with their New Year resolutions.

February was filled with heart health information from Amanda Krippel, Harris County FCH Agent, Hannah Eason, UTHealth Intern, and Dr. Davis providing an overview of the DASH (Dietary Approaches for Stopping Hypertension) Eating plan. Following the DASH Diet and other lifestyle changes are proven to lower blood pressure.

During the month of March, Lora Jorgensen and Kristina Brown, Harris County Better Living for Texans Agents, conducted a session titled "Rethink Your Drink" and discussed healthy beverages, added sugar, and sugar substitutes. In the next session, the staff presented "Hosting with Charcuterie Boards" and provided information on how ingredients fit into MyPlate, food safety measures to consider, and demonstrated making a board.







Students at Atherton Elementary Become Health Heroes!

by Laura Holt, Harris County Extension Agent, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program

More than 60 - 2nd and 3rd grade students at Atherton Elementary School have graduated the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program's (EFNEP) Healthy Hero Adventures nutrition education series and have become health heroes! During this virtual program, students learned about the 5 food groups of MyPlate including how to make healthy meal and snack choices, the importance of having fun by staying physically active and how to practice food safety such as hand washing to keep themselves and others safe when handling food.

Grape Bouns

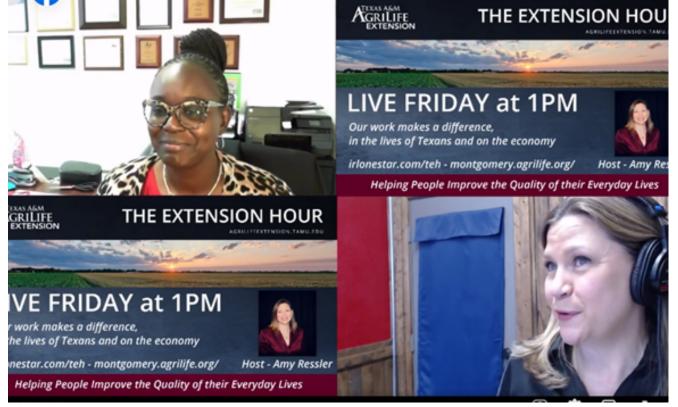
Grape

While Atherton has partnered with EFNEP for many years, this was their first experience with virtual programming. The students, along with their teachers and EFNEP Nutrition Education Associate, Eveli Chila, rose to the challenge by making the virtual learning experience fun and interactive. Students were able to create their own version of MyPlate by identifying and drawing healthy foods as they were introduced in the curriculum. Atherton is also one of the first Harris County schools to complete Healthy Hero Adventures, a new curriculum introduced by EFNEP this school year.



Left: Example of student work identifying healthy fruits and vegetables.

Above: EFNEP Nutrition Education Associate Eveli Chila



COMING TOGETHER FOR RACIAL UNDERSTANDING WORKGROUP

BY DR. SONJA STUEART-DAVIS, HARRIS COUNTY FAMILY AND COMMUNITY HEALTH AGENT

Dr. Sonja Davis is a member of the "Coming Together for Racial Understanding" workgroup. The workgroup is comprised of employees of both Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Prairie View A&M Cooperative Extension Program who are working to minimize systemic racism and biases with the two Extension organizations as well as their clientele throughout the state of Texas.

In March, Amy Ressler, Montgomery County Family & Community Health Agents and Dr. Davis conducted a Diversity training for over 90 childcare providers from throughout the State. The training provided information on understanding implicit and explicit biases, equity vs. equality, and provided suggestions for parents and caregivers to teach children anti-racism and to celebrate differences.

Members of the group have also been guests on "The Extension Hour", a Montgomery County community radio show. Dr. Davis and other members share experiences and have open and honest dialogue around race. To hear more about the work that the group has been involved in tune in to some of the shows below.

Flip the Script: https://www.facebook.com/agrilifemoco/videos/682307042486776

Dialogue and Debate: https://www.facebook.com/agrilifemoco/videos/287320432741665

Case studies: https://www.facebook.com/agrilifemoco/videos/347642426670707



CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT

BY DR. SONJA STUEART-DAVIS, HARRIS COUNTY FAMILY AND COMMUNITY HEALTH AGENT

Approximately 42% of Harris County deaths were related to cardiovascular disease, 28% of the adult population are obese and 10% of the adult population are diagnosed with diabetes. Most chronic diseases can be prevented by eating a nutritious diet, being physically active, avoiding tobacco and excessive drinking, and getting regular health screenings. During February and March Agent Davis and Hannah Eason, UTHealth Intern, partnered with the YMCA to conduct the Wisdom, Power, Control Diabetes Management Series and Do Well Be Well with Hypertension Series. The sessions were held on Tuesdays via zoom with approximately 40 participants each week.

Participants who attended the Wisdom, Power, Control Series were taught about diabetes, how to check their blood glucose, healthy blood glucose ranges, eating healthy with diabetes using the MyPlate method, the importance of taking medications as prescribed, stress management, avoiding diabetes complications and much more.

Participants who attended the Do Well, Be Well with Hypertension Series were taught the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) Eating Plan to manage hypertension. DASH teaches participants to daily consume 4-5 servings of fruits and vegetables each, 3 servings of low-fat dairy, 6-8 servings of grains with half being whole grain, and less than 6 servings of protein. Exercise and following the DASH eating plan health benefits include lowering blood pressure, improved heart health, LDL-cholesterol, weight loss, and reducing risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

Each week participants were assigned homework related to the topic and set personal goals to better improve their lifestyle.

Partnering with Choice Nation Academy

By Alfredo Alberto, Extension Agent – FCH – Cooperative Extension Program



Over the past two years, the Cooperative Extension Program and Choice Nation Academy (CNA) have partnered in providing money management and character development programing to their classmen. CNA is a non-profit youth empowerment program that offers leadership training, tutoring, and mentoring services for youth and young adults.

CNA classmen have also participated in the Expanded Food Nutrition Education Program under the tutelage of Nutrition Education Associate, Ms. Patricia Colbert. Every year the participant showcases what they have learned throughout their semester in the program via a capstone project. Due to COVID-19, this year's Capstone was virtual. Not surprisingly, each participant successfully showcased (via video presentation) the value they gained in themselves, delicious recipes they adapted from EFNEP and an entrepreneurial spirit to be their own boss one day. These young people graduated from the program fully displaying that they are true trailblazers of their generation.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Click on listings for more information.

HOME GROWN LECTURE SERIES

GROWING FABULOUS HOUSEPLANTS

MAY 20TH @ 10:00 A.M.

WELLNESS WEDNESDAY - ALL ABOUT THE GRILL

MAY 26TH @ 10:00 A.M.

<u>A "LEGEN-DAIRY" LECTURE</u>
JUNE 3RD@ 10:00 A.M.

<u>ART FROM THE GARDEN</u>
JUNE 17TH @ 10:00 A.M.

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING

(FOR ADULTS IN YOUTH SETTINGS)

JUNE 22ND @ 9:00 A.M.

<u>JUNE 23RD @ 9:00 A.M.</u>

We provide programs, tools, and resources -local & statewide- that teach people how to improve agriculture and food production, advance health practices, protect the environment, strengthen our communities, and enrich youth.

IN COOPERATION WITH ...

Lina Hidalgo, Rodney Ellis, Adrian Garcia, Tom S. Ramsey, R. Jack Cagle, Harris County Judge Commissioner, Precinct 1 Commissioner, Precinct 2 Commissioner, Precinct 3 Commissioner, Precinct 4

Making A Difference Quarterly Newsletter
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The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife..

TEXAS A&M GRILIFE EXTENSION



PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Cooperative Extension Program



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