



Practicing collaboration and innovation to advance the unique interests of urban counties in Texas

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

Extension in the City

January 2024
Quarterly Newsletter

 **PRAIRIE VIEW**
A&M UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Practicing collaboration and innovation to advance the unique interests of urban counties in Texas



AGRILIFEEXTENSION.TAMU.EDU

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

MISSION STATEMENT:

“Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service works daily to make Texas better by providing innovative solutions at the intersection of agriculture, natural resources, youth, and health, thereby improving the well-being of individuals, families, businesses, and communities through education and service.”

VISION STATEMENT:

“Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service will be the leader in providing science-based information and solutions in agriculture and health to every Texan.”

SHARED VALUES:

“We value People, Programs, and Partnerships.”

Fort Bend County Master Gardeners Donate 2,795 Pounds of Food in 2023



The Fort Bend County Master Gardener Association Vegetable Team is pictured above with the last donation of 2023 to the Mamie George Community Center to share with area residents in need.

The Fort Bend County Master Gardener Association is dedicated to education and outreach. **Produce** harvested from demonstration gardens is **donated to local food pantries**. The Association set a goal to grow and donate 2000 lbs. of fresh vegetables in 2023.

Just before the holidays, the Vegetable Garden Team delivered the last donation of the year bringing their total to **1,870.75 lbs. of fresh produce** (valued at \$2,571.01). Additionally, Fort Bend County Master Gardener Food Drives throughout the year brought in **924.25 lbs. of food** (valued at \$1,056.99), bringing the grand total of Fresh Produce and Food Drive items collected and delivered in 2023 to **2,795.00 lbs. of food (roughly valued at: \$3,627.99)**.



BEXAR COUNTY 4-H PROCLAMATION

4-H is America's largest youth development organization-empowering nearly six million young people with the skills to lead for a lifetime.

In Texas, 4-H is delivered by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and provides experiences where young people learn by doing. For more than 100 years, 4-H has welcomed young people of all beliefs and backgrounds, giving kids a voice to express who they are and how they make their lives and communities better.

By participating in 4-H, kids and teens can complete hands-on projects in areas like health, science, agriculture, and civic engagement in a positive environment where they receive guidance from adult mentors and are encouraged to take on proactive leadership roles. Kids experience 4-H through in-school and after-school programs, school and community clubs, and 4-H camps.

To recognize National 4-H Week, the Bexar County Commissioners Court which includes Rebeca Clay-Flores of Precinct 1, Justin Rodriguez of Precinct 2, Grant Moody of Precinct 3, and Tommy Calvert of Precinct 4 presented a National 4-H Week Proclamation on October 4th, to honor the Texas 4-H & Youth Development Program of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service for providing experience-based education to youth in Bexar County.



HONORING THE LEGACY OF JEFF RASKA

In November 2023, Jeff Raska was recognized for his 13-year tenure at Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Horticultural Program at the Dallas County Commissioners Court. Raska's career began as a 4-H Program Assistant in the Dallas County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office, and he was subsequently promoted to Horticulture Coordinator. During his tenure, Raska spearheaded numerous initiatives that have continued to positively impact and transform communities in Dallas. Jeff served in various capacities and contributed to several special projects, working tirelessly to effect change and leave a lasting impact.

Throughout his 13-year career, Jeff Raska served as a Learn, Grow, Eat, Go Project Specialist, a role that involved his participation in a USDA Grant study of Childhood Obesity in eight Dallas ISD schools. Additionally, he served as a School Garden Specialist and Backyard Chicken Specialist for Dallas County, where he provided advice and wrote protocols for many school districts. Moreover, he designed and installed the Urban County Farm at the Dallas County Commissioner's facility, with the help of many volunteers. The farm produces and donates tons of food to area homeless shelters and serves as a blueprint for transforming a concrete parking lot into a functioning urban farm that feeds the community.

Jeff Raska's exceptional contributions have been recognized beyond his immediate working environment, with numerous radio and television appearances. We are grateful for the time Mr. Raska spent with us and all that he accomplished during his tenure. We extend our best wishes to him in his future endeavors.



Jeff Raska being honored
at the Commissioners Court



BRAIN HEALTH SEMINAR II

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines chronic disease as those lasting longer than one year and resulting in continued medical care or limited daily activities including type 2 diabetes and hypertension. Both of these chronic diseases can impact a person's susceptibility for memory related diseases such as Alzheimer's. Currently, more than 400,000 people in Texas are living with Alzheimer's disease, and over 1,079,000 family and friends are providing care.

The planning committee (which Dallas County FCH agent Liz Espie served on) met twice to plan for the November event. The seminar included presentations covering a variety of topics including Ballet for your Brain and Balance, Healthy Sleeping Habits for Seniors, Hearing and Cognition, and Importance of Early Detection. Dallas County FCH agent Liz Espie presented a cooking demonstration highlighting recipes from the Mediterranean Eating Pattern that included ingredients that promote cognitive health. This demonstration was done in conjunction with the "Healthy Living for your Brain and Body" curriculum by the Alzheimer's Association. With 250 participants (caregivers and those living with Alzheimer's) attending this brain health seminar at St. Andrew's Methodist Church, there are plans for this educational program to continue with it only being in it's second year.



Liz Espie during her
cooking demonstration

TUMBLEWEEDS 4-H GETS ACTIVE IN THE COMMUNITY

The Tumbleweeds 4-H club was very active in the community for the last couple of months of 2023. In the month of November alone, they had a booth at the City of Richardson Culture in the Core festival, promoting the message of cultural equity and inclusivity. With help from the Pegasus 4-H club they were able to garner 138 signatures from event attendees pledging to be more culturally inclusive. The club also set up a petting zoo at El Dorado retirement home in Richardson bringing two sheep, two ducks, two chickens, one goat, four rabbits, one bearded dragon lizard, one tarantula, several hissing cockroaches, and a photography & entomology display. Lastly, they had a community service activity where they decorated meal bags to distribute to the homeless for Under my umbrella where members from East Dallas 4-H club participated.

December was another active month for the club where they hosted a blanket drive, helped run a bake sale with East Dallas 4-H, and participated in the City of Richardson Christmas parade, with the theme "Parade of Misfit Toys," winning first place in the marching/ walking entry for non-profit/ civic group and collected 26+ toys for Network of Community ministries.



Tumbleweeds 4-H booth during the Core Festival



Tumbleweeds 4-H petting zoo at El Dorado retirement home

A TASTE OF LATIN HERITAGE

Terri Wesley is a Nutrition Education Associate that hosts several 90-minute programs throughout the Dallas metroplex focusing on healthy eating and exercise. During the month of October Mrs. Wesley visited the Kleberg Riley Recreation Center and hosted a program titled, "A Taste of Latin Heritage." The program audience was a group of senior citizens ages 65 and up. Mrs. Wesley's goal is to introduce nutrition and physical activity to the underserved population, encouraging her class to exercise and make healthy food choices.

The lessons she has shared have included how to use different herbs and spices, growing her audiences understanding of tubers (which is another name for potatoes in the Latin and African heritage), pulses (which are also known as peas or lentils), the use of whole grains rather than refined grains, and fruits and vegetables. She also encourages them to maintain a balance of daily exercise such as: walking, jogging, sweeping the kitchen, and ensuring dishes are washed after their meals so they aren't just sitting on what they ate.

Mrs. Wesley has been able to not only build and establish a relationship with her senior class but has received amazing feedback from them on how much they have enjoyed her teachings and how beneficial it has been learning how to use other spices for their meals to add flavor instead of salt.



Mrs. Wesley prepping for her class



Tubers prepared by Mrs. Wesley



Mrs. Wesley teaching her class

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES THROUGH HANDS-ON LEARNING!

Better Living for Texan's vision is "Creating opportunities, changing lives. " A vision that has come to fruition in a collaboration with the Community Access Program [CAP] from Socorro Independent School District since 2020. Students with intellectual disabilities that have completed all their high school credits, enroll in CAP for a year to learn how to transition from high school students to becoming an independent young adult. Students are taught a variety of skills from food safety, grocery shopping, to navigating the public transportation system.

Better Living for Texans agent, Ingrid Macias, has implemented nutrition, gardening, and physical activity series with CAP students. In one of our most recent nutrition series, students learned how to use a can opener, prepare BLT's famous veggie "cowboy salad," learned how to organize a shopping list, and clip coupons to shop nutritious food on a budget. One of the highlights from a student attending our gardening series "Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities" was securing an internship with a landscaping company! Something worth celebrating and be proud of as a community. The six-week gardening series provided the basic knowledge to start a vegetable garden. The group also learned about irrigation needs, fertilizing the land, the use of mulch, composting, and the different insects and plant diseases that gardens can encounter.



EMERGING PEST IN PECAN PRODUCTION

In November 2023 an emerging pest has made it way into the Lower El Paso Valley. This pest is the flat head tree borer. It has been identified in multiple orchards primarily on dead wood. The adults body length varies from $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long, greenish bronze above and beneath. The larvae are cream colored, legless, and vary from $\frac{3}{4}$ to $1 \frac{1}{4}$ inches long with a flattened head and first body segment. The life span of these borers are typically one year but some larvae may take up to three years to emerge as adults. Currently in this growing year if any dead wood has any signs of bore holes, immediate removal and destruction of the infected wood is recommended - Joel Arce, IPM agent, El Paso and Hudspeth Counties.

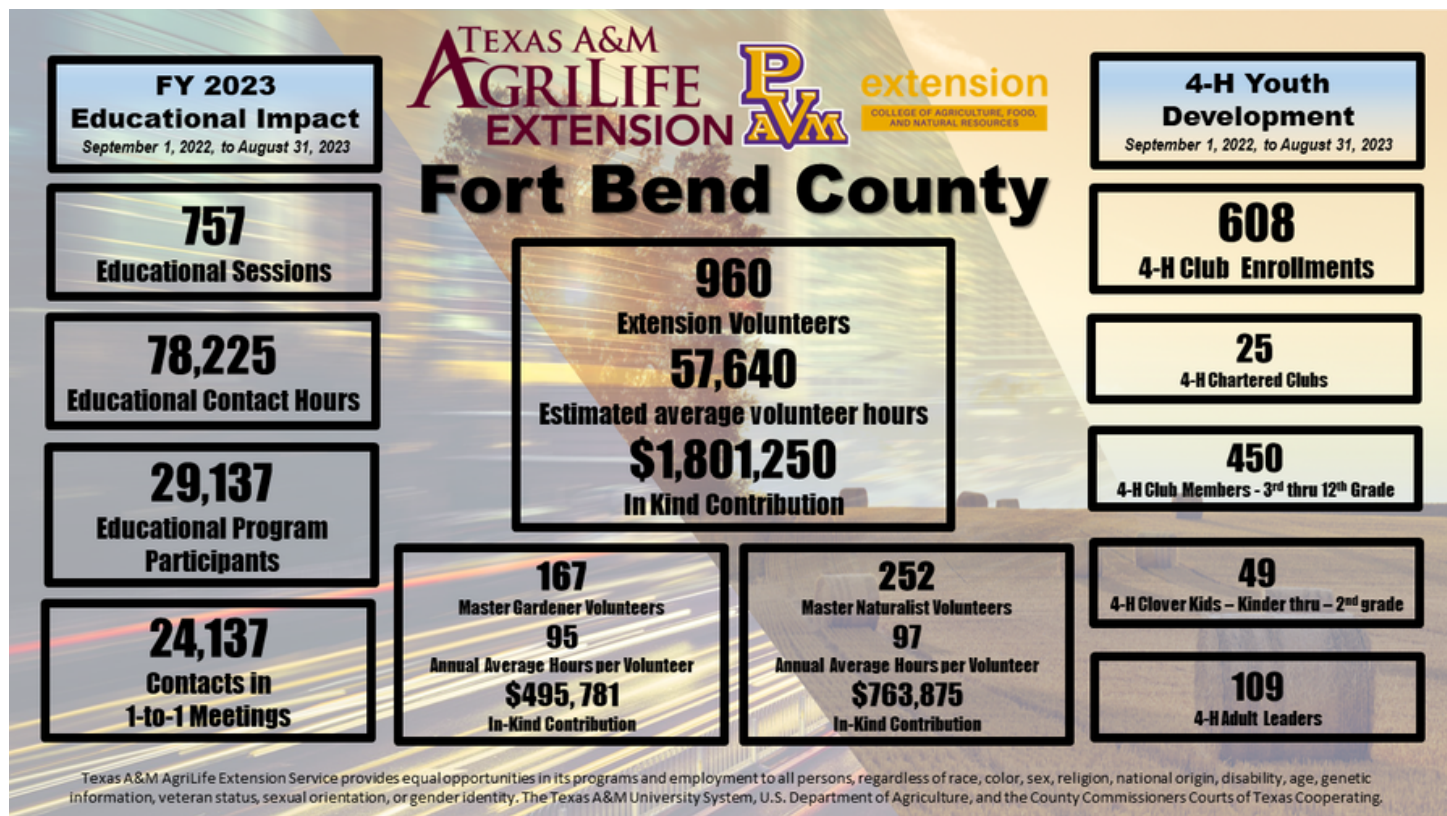


NEW AGENT ALERT!



Join us in welcoming our new Better Living for Texans Extension Agent, Jimena Fernandez. Jimena, a native El Pasoan graduated from UT-El Paso with a bachelor's degree in public health and a minor in Nutrition. She has worked with local ISDs, volunteered with the El Pasoans Fighting Hunger Food Bank, and has completed international research work in Panama with aging populations. She began her extension experience as a student intern at our EFNEP office.

MAKING IMPACTS - FY 2023 IN REVIEW



Sewing Skills are So Important

Fort Bend County youth participated in a 4-hour **Sewing "Mini-Camp"** during a school break on November 20, where **20 participants** learned **basic sewing skills** by making decorative pillows.



Having fun while learning to sew, these young people acquired new skills

Pecan Harvest Festival Provides Education and Fun

The Pecan Harvest Festival was held in downtown Richmond on November 18th. Fort Bend County **Extension Agents** and **Master Gardeners** hosted the Pecan Education area of the festival utilizing the Farm Bureau Education Trailer. Experts were on hand to answer questions about growing, harvesting, and eating pecans. The 26 samples entered in the Nov. 8th Pecan Show were on display. Also, **4-H & Youth Development Agents** and the Master Gardener **Youth Activities Committee** hosted the Kids Activities area of the festival with a variety of interactive games and crafts. An **estimated 5,000 people** attended the event.



L to R: A winner from the Pecan Show, Kids Activity area with 4-H, Volunteers leading youth activities, Volunteers providing pecan education

FBC Commissioners Court Honor National 4-H Week

National 4-H Week was commemorated by the Fort Bend County Commissioners court on October 10th during their regular meeting when **4 local 4-H members** represented the county program by attending and presenting gift baskets to the Judge and each Commissioner. Field and Stream 4-H Club member, and Texas 4-H Ambassador, **Gloria Stephens**, gave an insightful and delightful speech highlighting the value of 4-H in her life. You can see her speech [here](#) (minutes 14:20 - 18:10).



Fort Bend County Extension Staff and 4-H members pose with the Fort Bend County Commissioner's Court in celebration of National 4-H Week



4-H member, Gloria Stephens, addresses the court

Empowering Harris County Youth: Norman Borlaug Youth in Agriculture Program



In November, Harris County Extension Agents Katherine Hamilton and Steven Frederick accompanied 19 Harris County students to Texas A&M University. They attended the first session of an incredibly unique academic enrichment program offered to outstanding high school students from around Texas, the Norman Borlaug Youth in Agriculture Program.

This experience immerses 34 urban and rural youth in solving complex challenges in our state from water and food insecurity, land fragmentation and more, requiring leaders from both backgrounds to deliver solutions. The Growing a Vision experience is an opportunity offered to youth who want to make a difference in their community and hone their leadership skills.

Texas A&M University professors are supporting students through a multi-faceted educational strategy, paired with instilling proven professional habits, positively impacting the trajectory of this next generation of leaders. By participating in the program youth not only get an enriching leadership experience but they are given a scholarship for their 4-H enrollment fee along with an educational grant following completion of the program.

Texas A&M University professors are guiding students through a multi-faceted educational strategy, instilling professional habits that will positively shape the future of the next generation of leaders.

Program Highlights:

- Three in-person weekend-long sessions
- Weekly virtual classes over six months
- Enriching leadership experience
- Scholarship for 4-H enrollment fee
- Educational grant upon program completion



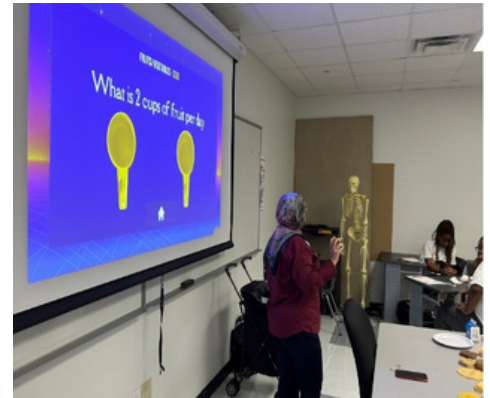
Girls, Inc. Bold Leaders Summit 2023

The Bold Leaders Summit 2023: Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) was invited for the second consecutive year by Girls Inc. to be a part of this empowering event that brought together over 100 amazing girls aged 12-18. Our close ties with Girls Inc. through the Imagine Science Partnership made it happen, and EFNEP has been in the mix for the past two years.

Picture this: STEM activities, presentations, and loads of inspiration categorized under three tracks – Strong, Smart, and Bold. The girls got hands-on with STEM activities, dabbled in product development, and even delved into discussions on mental health and wellness practices. But that's not all; they also got the lowdown on growing and saving money – talk about life skills in action!

We, the Harris County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension crew, are excited to be a part of this journey with Girls Inc. Our collaboration keeps getting stronger, and the Imagine Science Partnership is making waves in creating a positive space for learning and personal development.

As we look back on the Bold Leaders Summit 2023, we can't help but feel a sense of pride. Here's to more opportunities to inspire and uplift these incredible young leaders. The last two years have been a blast, and we're eager to see what the future holds.



“Securing Our Future!”

The Safe Riders Car Seat Program is a crucial initiative dedicated to ensuring the safety of young passengers during vehicular travel. Launched with the primary goal of reducing the incidence of child injuries and fatalities in car accidents, this program provides valuable education and resources to parents and caregivers. The program offers comprehensive guidance on installation techniques, encouraging caregivers to secure car seats correctly to optimize protection.

Prairie View A&M University CEP Agent Te'Anna Donaldson regularly offers this program twice monthly, for more information please call the Harris County Extension Office at 713-274-0950.

2023 VOLUNTEER AWARDS



Each year the Tarrant County AgriLife Extension team hosts an interpretation luncheon and volunteer awards reception to close out the year and celebrate AgriLife's big wins. The 2023 event was held on Thursday, December 14th at the Tarrant County Plaza Building with nearly 50 in attendance.

The following awards recipients were recognized by the Tarrant County team.



Bob Byers

FRIEND OF EXTENSION AWARD
FORT WORTH BOTANICAL GARDEN
BOTANICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF TEXAS



From Left to Right:
Laura Miller, County Extension Agent-Comm Hort,
Bob Byers, award recipient, and
Courtney Davis, County Extension Director

The Friend of Extension Award
recognizes an individual or organization
for outstanding service to the people of
Tarrant County by their exceptional
support and personal involvement in
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.



Cherrelle Tillis

JOHN SOUTH SPIRIT OF EXTENSION AWARD
P.E. CURRICULUM SPECIALIST
FORT WORTH ISD



From Left to Right:
Robin Hall, Extension Agent-EFNEP,
Cherrelle Tillis, award recipient, and
Courtney Davis, County Extension Director

The John South Spirit of Extension Award
recognizes a program area committee
member for exemplary service in the design
and delivery of educational programs which
enhance the quality of life for the
people of Tarrant County.



Kacee Gordillo

DARLENE MYATT FRIEND OF CHILDREN AWARD
TARRANT COUNTY 4-H

The Darlene Myatt Friend of Children Award recognizes an individual or organization for dedicating time, talents, and treasure to teaching children with dynamic enthusiasm and loving leadership.



From Left to Right: Kate Marshall, County Extension Agent-4-H, Kacee Gordillo, award recipient, and Courtney Davis, County Extension Director



Renetta White

DIRECTOR'S AWARD
TRANSITION CENTER
FORT WORTH ISD

From Left to Right: Jordan Peldyak, Extension Agent-CEP 4-H, Dolores Haley, Nutrition Education Assistant - EFNEP, Renetta White, award recipient, and Courtney Davis, County Extension Director



Allison Reid

DIRECTOR'S AWARD
TCU ATHLETICS

From Left to Right: Kate Marshall, County Extension Agent-4-H, Allison Reid, award recipient, and Courtney Davis, County Extension Director



Congratulations
to all of our
Recipients!

BETTER LIVING FOR TEXANS AT GUS GARCIA RECREATION CENTER



Better Living for Texans (BLT) Agent Rebeka Garcia recently conducted a “Be Well, Live Well” series at Gustavo “Gus” Garcia Recreation Center in Austin, Texas. The “Be Well, Live Well” series is nutrition education tailored toward older adults and is five sessions long. Each week the participants were able to learn about how to remain physically independent and how their health directly affects their independence.

Some topics included learning how to read a food label, the importance of food safety, and learning new recipes that help with food planning. Each week a healthy recipe was prepared such as Tuna Salad, which includes a bed of baby greens topped with granny smith apples, mandarin slices, sliced almonds, tuna, and a homemade vinaigrette: olive oil, lime, and garlic powder. Yum, right?

Rebeka thoroughly enjoyed teaching and learning from all the 20 graduates at Gustavo “Gus” L. Garcia Recreation Center. She hopes to be back in the Summer to implement “Walk n Talk”, which is a physical activity series that BLT offers as well. If anyone is interested in nutrition, physical activity, or gardening classes in Travis County, please contact Rebeka Garcia (rebeka.garcia@ag.tamu.edu) for more information.

Tasty Tuna Salad



Agent in Action



TEEN CUISINE AT PIONEER CROSSING ELEMENTARY



Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program's (EFNEP) Nutrition Education Associate, Velma Moreno (Extension Agent - Oscar Zamora), recently implemented "Teen Cuisine" at Pioneer Crossing Elementary with 6th Graders - Manor ISD. Teen Cuisine is a nutrition education program designed for teenagers. Some topics include learning about basic nutrition, MyPlate, making healthy food choices, food safety, basic culinary skills, and the importance of physical education. Velma had a total of 36 graduates that completed Teen Cuisine.

While at Pioneer Crossing Elementary, Velma had many success stories from the students such as, "Now paying attention to food labels when choosing snacks", "enjoying the food demonstration recipe (MyPlate sundae) and wanting to replicate it at home", and "learning how to correctly measure dry and wet ingredients."

EFNEP Associates and Agent are currently preparing for the busy Spring ahead of them! Including partnerships with Avance, Timmerman Elementary, Pleasant Hill Elementary, and many more.



Velma teaching about reading the nutrition fact label. The label is broken up by sections of nutrients to increase and nutrients to decrease, for easier digestion (pun intended).

BEXAR COUNTY

County Judge Peter Sakai
Commissioner Rebeca Clay-Flores
Commissioner Justin Rodriguez
Commissioner Grant Moody
Commissioner Tommy Calvert



DALLAS COUNTY

County Judge Clay Jenkins
Commissioner Dr. Elba Garcia
Commissioner John Wiley Price
Commissioner
Andrew Sommerman
Commissioner Dr. Theresa Daniel



EL PASO COUNTY

County Judge
Ricardo A. Samaniego
Commissioner Carlos Leon
Commissioner David Stout
Commissioner Iliana Holguin
Commissioner Sergio Coronado



FORT BEND COUNTY

County Judge KP George
Commissioner Vincent Morales, Jr.
Commissioner Grady Prestage
Commissioner Andy Meyers
Commissioner Dexter L. McCoy



HARRIS COUNTY

County Judge Lina Hidalgo
Commissioner Rodney Ellis
Commissioner Adrian Garcia
Commissioner Tom S. Ramsey
Commissioner Lesley Briones



TARRANT COUNTY

County Judge Tim O'Hare
Commissioner Roy C. Brooks
Commissioner Alisa Simmons
Commissioner Gary Fickes
Commissioner Manny Ramirez



TRAVIS COUNTY

County Judge Andy Brown
Commissioner Jeff Travillion
Commissioner Brigid Shea
Commissioner Ann Howard
Commissioner Margaret Gómez



**With the support of the County Judge
and County Commissioners, each Texas
A&M AgriLife Extension County Office
offers the knowledge resources of the
Texas A&M University System to local
citizens for self-improvement, individual
action, and community problem-solving.**

Thank You.