

Goals for FY 2025

Goal One: Resource Stewardship

Prioritize research-based educational programming and interdisciplinary collaboration to promote the responsible stewardship and sustainable practices of Fort Bend County's natural resources for both new and established landowners, and across various sectors and industry partnerships.

Goal Two: Youth Development

Enhance the programming and resources available to schools and families both of which are necessary to broaden concepts in agriculture, natural sciences, human nutrition, and community health for the next generation of Fort Bend County citizens and leaders.

Goal Three: Community Sustainability

Encourage innovation, deliver science-based preventive health programming, and provide the operational support necessary to sustain an environment of readiness, preparedness, opportunity, protection, and resiliency in Fort Bend County cities and communities.

Goal Four: Economic Strength

Enhance the efficiency, profitability, and resiliency of agriculture, natural resources, food systems, and local economies in Fort Bend County, the state of Texas, and around the world.

Goal Five: Healthy Living

Provide innovative service and educational programming to apply, coordinate, and integrate scientific evidence at the intersection of nutrition, human health, and agriculture.

This Quarter
by the Numbers:

8,119

Contacts in 1-to-1 meetings

10,010

Educational Program Participants

322

Educational Sessions

540

Educational Contact Hours

85 Promotional Events

reaching 21,091 people

4,315

NEWSLETTER CONTACTS

Numbers from AgriLife TAMED reporting system
09/1/24 - 11/30/24 as of December 31, 2024

Our Team

Helping Texans Thrive

Administration

Dr. Amy Ressler, County Extension Director
Cheryl Wasicek, Administrative Manager
Doug Staff, Technical Assistant
Karen Santos, Sr. Administrative Assistant
Norma Diaz, Office Assistant

4-H Youth Development

Danielle Prihoda, County Extension Agent -
4-H Youth Development
Dr. Willa Williams, County Extension Agent -
Urban Youth Development
Jose Cavazos, PVAMU Extension Agent -
4-H Youth Development
Vacant, Administrative Assistant

Agriculture & Natural Resources/ Horticulture

Vacant, County Extension Agent - Agriculture
& Natural Resources
Dr. Abdul Hakeem, PVAMU Extension Agent -
Agriculture & Natural Resources
Jody Taylor, County Extension Agent -
Horticulture
Brandy Rader, Program Coordinator -
Master Gardeners/Master Naturalists
Lorraine Niemeyer, Administrative Assistant

Family & Community Health

Leticia Hardy, County Extension Agent -
Family & Community Health
Nisa Khan, County Extension Agent -
Family & Community Health
Erica Knighton, PVAMU Extension Agent -
Family & Community Health
Celeste Feast, Extension Agent -
Better Living for Texans
Sujata Jhangiani, Extension Assistant -
Expanded Food & Nutrition Education
Victoria Zwahr, Program Coordinator -
Family & Community Health

Community & Economic Development

Janelle Johnson, PVAMU Extension Agent -
Community & Economic Development

Program Spotlight: Pecan Harvest Festival

Goal Three



The annual **Pecan Harvest Festival** is a partnership between the City of Richmond and the Richmond Rotary Club, held the Saturday before Thanksgiving. Extension is involved in the pre-planning and providing educational activities for adults and youth. The festival drew an **estimated 4,500 visitors**.



Extension served the community during the Pecan Harvest Festival in a variety of ways as pictured above. Agents and Master Gardener/Master Naturalist volunteers provided Pecan Education and activities in the Kids Zone.



The Fort Bend Master Gardener Association's **Vegetable Team** activity serves the community in a variety of ways, not the least of which is their food drive and fresh produce contributions to the Mamie George Community Center and Trini's Market Food Pantry. Led by Jean Trevino, the group harvests produce from the teaching gardens at the Extension office to donate. On Nov 20 they **delivered 44 lbs. of fresh vegetables**. Customers at the market can shop for their choice of fresh food items.



A friendly face welcomes plant sale visitors.



Helpful volunteers are ready to complete the sale.

The Master Gardener's hosted the fall **Vegetable and Herb Plant Sale** on Oct 12 in the Extension Education Center. A variety of **3,000 starter plants** were cultivated in the MG Greenhouse; 1,000 went to non-profit organizations and the other 2,000 were sold at the plant sale, with gross sales totaling **\$5,466** to help fund future 501(c)3 programming efforts. Around **80 volunteers** worked the event and **137 shoppers** attended.



A wide selection of plants known to thrive in Fort Bend are available.



Answers are available on-the-spot. The hotline is also available all year.



Pictured to the left, Peggy d'Hemecourt shows off the **School Garden Project Guide** developed for Fort Bend County by the Fort Bend County Master Gardener Association. The guide is a useful tool for teachers wanting to integrate gardens into their curricula. In January, the Extension office will add a **School and Community Garden Coordinator** to the staff to help provide dedicated guidance and manage Extension connections for gardens at schools, parks, community centers, etc.



New County Extension Agent - Horticulture joined the team on **November 1**

Joseph "Jody" Taylor earned a Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration from University of Louisville and a Bachelor of Arts in Homeland Security from American Military University. He is a veteran, farmer, Master Gardener, beekeeper, and avid community volunteer.

We are looking for a County Extension Agent for Agriculture
This position will focus on **youth livestock** projects and **animal production and management** with adults, as well as other general agriculture areas. A bachelors degree in Agriculture or a related field is require. Anticipated start date is June 1.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Goal Two



4-H Ambassadors
collecting for the pet food drive

Fort Bend County **4-H Youth Ambassadors** are actively learning **leadership & community service**. The group hosted a pet food drive on October 12 at Tractor Supply. They also hosted a fun activity and fundraiser during the Pecan Harvest Festival with a "Buck for a Buck" where people could donate money and practice archery on Nov 23. The group meets monthly to learn skills and make plans to serve.



4-H Ambassadors
at the Pecan Harvest Festival



4-H Ambassador, Madeleine Schimmer, visited with potential 4-H members during the Fort Bend County Fair on Sep 27. She highlighted STEM project opportunities

4-H has something for everybody and the best way to let folks know is through **promotional activities**. On Sep 27, 4-H Ambassadors promoted **STEM projects** in 4-H during the Fort Bend County Fair. On Oct 12, 4-H members were in **Kendra Scott stores** in the area where a portion of sales in-store & online were donated to Texas 4-H. The statewide the **event raised \$11,165**.

Ask me about 4-H!



Arianna Crum and Ava Crum represented Fort Bend County 4-H at the Kendra Scott store in Highland Village during the "Kendra gives back" event.

- **4-H Homeschool Labs** offer a unique opportunity for parents to enhance their STEM curricula with hands-on robotics lessons for students. During the 1st quarter, an average of **10 students** attended each of **4 robotics labs** for a total of **38 contacts**.
- Agent Willa Williams worked with **4 public and private** schools teaching **rocketry** with over **800 contacts**. She has also started the **Katy-Houston Rocketry 4-H Club** with **11 members**.



Participants in the STEM/Robotics Homeschool Labs learned to build, code, and test robots to perform specific tasks.



PVAMU Extension Agent - 4H, Jose Cavazos reported several activities in the 1st quarter. In September he was at Wessendorff Middle School with a Sports Fishing program, at Peak Academy with a Cowboy Clinic, hosted Home School Labs on Sports Fishing & Cowboy Clinic. Agent Cavazos was also at Lantern Lane Elementary for a Pre AG'tivity Barn event. He was actively involved in the AG'tivity Barn with an evening activity introducing roping, and fishing activity with the school tours on weekdays. In October Cavazos attended a Shooting Sports Coach Training, went to a National 4-H agents conference in Boise, Idaho, and helped with Heifer, Lamb, and Goat Validations. In November, he helped with Major Show Entry Nights, was at the Olympia Lakes Middle School Career Day and the Pecan Harvest Festival Kid's Zone with Roping, and "Backyard Bass" fishing.



Current 4-H Club Enrollments

25 Clover Kids
K-2nd grade

336 Club Members
3rd - 12th grade

60 Registered
Adult Leaders

421 Total enrollment
as of 12/15/24



FAMILY & COMMUNITY HEALTH

Goals Three & Five

Volunteer extraordinaire, Carol Gaas, worked with agent Leticia Hardy to host a **youth quilting workshop** on Nov 26, where **16 youth participants** gained hands-on experience in quilting and sewing. Carol and a few of her Quilting Guild friends taught valuable skills.



The workshop focused on basics in quilting like sewing safety, pattern creation, and fabric manipulation. Participants were able to apply their skills in creating a finished quilted product to take home.

Pictured left, Carol Gaas shows how to thread a sewing machine. Above, a participant shows off her creation.



Better Living for Texans Agent, Celeste Feast, engaged local community members in her advisory committee to help strengthen her programs. A **group of 12** met on Sep 12. During the 1st quarter she conducted **35 educational sessions with 463 participants**. A highlight was working with the Excel Adventists Academy with the **"Early Learn, Grow, Eat and Go"** lessons. Students enjoyed tasting fresh fruit and veggies. Celeste and Norma had almost as much fun getting ready for the lessons and the kids did learning!



Celeste with 2 of her advisory committee members



Celeste & Norma prepare visuals for ELGEG



The students love it when Mrs. Celeste comes to visit.



A cutie with a kiwi



Better Living for Texans Agent Celeste Feast, Expanded Food and Nutrition Extension Assistant Sujata Jhangiani, and Urban Youth Development Agent Willa Williams, (*pictured above*) teamed up with **Fit Fort Bend** to promote Extension programs and healthy living using the smoothie bike and food samples at the Fit Fort Bend Launch Party at Wessendorff Park on Sep 21.

PVAMU EA-FCH, Eric Knighton reported work in October - December 2024

- Fort Bend County Fair - AG'Tivity Barn
- New St. Phillip Baptist Church, "A Taste of Latin American Heritage" with an average of 14 participants in each of 6 sessions
- Mamie George Community Center "A Taste of Latin American Heritage" with an average of 12 in each of 2 sessions
- Rosenberg Civic Center, "A Taste of Latin American Heritage" with an average of 6 in two sessions
- CYCLE Houston with Fit Fort Bend to get kids on bikes and reward reading – 62 kids received a bike and helmet at E. A Jones Elementary



FCH Agents Leticia Hardy and Nisa Khan conducted **"Sweet Treats" Camp** on Nov 25 (a make-up from the hurricane cancellation). They taught **6 youth** participants skills in food safety, balanced nutrition, & the creation of recipes for cookies and ice cream.

Pictured left top: youth work on making recipe adaptations for the perfect product. Pictured left bottom, Agents supervise and assist as needed while the students work.



Nisa Khan partnered with the Texas Master Naturalists (TMN) to teach **mycology** (study of fungi) at the Houston Museum of Natural Science on Sep 28, **reaching 100 people**. TMN educational outreach focused on ecosystems and Nisa focused on **edible mushrooms, health benefits, nutritional components and culinary tips**.

Expanded Food and Nutrition Extension Assistant, Sujata Jhangiani taught **45 sessions** in the 1st quarter making **368 contacts** with parents at local elementary schools, teaching nutrition & budgeting.

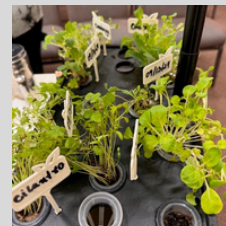
AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Goal Four

PVAMU Agriculture Agent, Dr. Abdul Hakeem hosted a workshop on **Container & Raised Bed Gardening** at the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Missouri City on Sep 26 with **10 participants**. On Oct 10, he hosted another workshop on **Microgreen Production & Marketing** at the same location with **15 individuals**.



Examples of microgreens for Dr. Hakeem's workshop



TEAMWORK ... Together Everyone Achieves More



The **AG'tivity Barn** has been promoting agriculture awareness for more than 20 years. In conjunction with the **Fort Bend County Fair** and with support from **Fort Bend County Farm Bureau**, Fort Bend County Extension hosted the annual event Sep 27- Oct 6, 2024. AG'tivity Barn is a hands-on, interactive way to bring agriculture to life. With six learning stations during school tours, and various agriculture themes on nights and weekends, fairgoers are exposed to a variety of topics. Because everyone in the Fort Bend County Extension office is involved in the Fair in one way or many, the in-kind contributions are considered a "Cornerstone Sponsorship" of the Fort Bend County Fair. In 2024, an estimated 105,000 people attended the Fair. A percentage, around **63,000 fairgoers participated in the public interface of the AG'tivity Barn** during open Fair hours. During organized **school tours, 1,214 participated** (1,119 students, 95 adults) from **10 Fort Bend County Schools**. Friday was reserved for special tours for participants in the Exceptional Rodeo when about **150 people** came through to see and touch the exhibits.



Welcome to the AG'tivity Barn!



Danielle Prihoda chatting about chickens



Volunteer Jim Kidda and Jose Cavazos detangle and teach about fishing



Jody Taylor buzzing about bees



Volunteer Dan Lawlor with an evening convo about cotton



Jennifer, Erika Bochat, Nisa, Danielle, Jose, Nisa's kids, a 4-H member, and Layla the goat



Students from PEAK Academy petting precious poultry

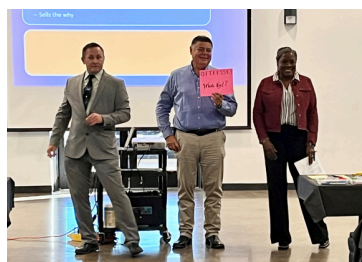


The Costal Cattlewomen help teach students from Needville Schools



Norma Diaz and Karen Santos cranking out the corn

Agents spend time in professional development training so that they can deliver the best possible programs to the people of Fort Bend County. The **New Agent On-boarding Sessions** on November 19 and 20 helped hone teaching skills.



A Liberty County agent, Jose Cavazos, and Celeste Feast show off their teaching techniques.



Jody Taylor explains it the way it is while agents from other counties chime in as needed.



Janelle Johnson delivers the detailed description with others.

Staff Spotlights:

Fort Bend County:



Lorraine Niemeyer has been with Fort Bend County for 13 years working in other departments before making her way to AgriLife Extension in 2022. Lorraine currently serves as the Sr. Office Assistant for the Horticulture, Agricultural/Natural Resources County Extension Agents, and PVAMU Ag Agent. She is the friendly hello and smile that visitors are greeted with when walking in the door of the Annex building. Lorraine and her husband, Bruce, have been married 30 years, have two dogs and several feral cats they've taken in along with their own pet chickens. Lorraine says she's experienced a lot of life, but she has come full circle and finally feels "at home" working in the area that supports farmers and gardeners.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service:



Dr. Willa Williams joined the Fort Bend County Extension team in 2023. She has extensive experience in Extension in Missouri, Colorado, and Arkansas. She earned her Doctorate of Education in Higher Education from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Her dissertation was on the Influences on students choosing a major in agriculture where she analyzed the factors, like student diversity and educational history, of undergraduate students who selected a major in colleges of agriculture, including family consumer sciences and biology sciences. She's happy to be back in Texas near family.

Connections:



Stan Kitzman, House Representative, Texas District 83, attended our total staff office conference on Oct 18 to share his vision of Texas' future and to hear about what matters to us. Kitzman is a great friend and supporter of Extension work. He will serve his second term as representative beginning in 2025.



Volunteer Appreciation:



Valued 4-H adult leader, **Veena Pena**, attended our total staff conference on Sep 20 where she shared about her passion for volunteering and helping people. She provided sage advice for how we can better serve our communities and live the 4-H motto "to make the best better."

Coming up IN THE NEXT QUARTER:

- **Grow Your Own:** *Edible Garden Planning* - Jan 11, *Fruit Trees* - Feb 1, *Raised Bed/Planters* - Mar 1
- **4-H Homeschool Labs** - Mondays 9:30-11:30, *Plant and Soil Sciences*, begins Jan 16, runs 6 weeks
- **Landscape Success:** *Growing a Great Lawn* - Jan 24, *Landscape Basics* - Feb 28, *Flowers* - Mar 28
- **40th Annual Fort Bend Regional Vegetable Conference** - Feb 6, Fort Bend County Fairgrounds
- **Fort Bend Extension Education Association - Spring Bingo Fundraiser** - Feb 8
- **FBCMG Fruit Tree Sale**, Feb 15
- **Spring Break Youth Workshops** - Mar 10-13
- **Urban Partnerships Synergy Symposium** - Apr 22

Closing Thought:

*I believe in people and their hopes,
their aspirations, and their faith;
in their right to make their own
decisions; in their ability and power
to enlarge their lives and plan for
the happiness of those they love.*
-The Extension Professionals' Creed -
Line 1



For more information:
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Cheryl Wasicek and Amy Ressler represented Extension at the Fair Association Sponsorship Reception on September 19, 2024