

DENTON COUNTY AGRILIFE UPDATE

JANUARY 2021

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

TEXAS SPEAKS

An important aspect of our agency is providing educational programs that address local needs. We have committees and volunteers that provide feedback to us, but now we have a newly developed survey called "TexasSpeaks." Denton County is participating, as well as all counties in Texas. The Extension Service highly values the opinions shared through the TexasSpeaks community assessment.

The expectation is that the assessment will take about 10 minutes and will solicit your input on both assets and issues in our community. It is an online, anonymous survey.

You can provide your input by going to <http://tx.ag/texasspeaks>

We ask that you complete the survey by March 31. But do it now before you forget! You are welcome to share the survey link with your social networks. We really want to hear from as many Texans as we possibly can.

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is a statewide network of professional educators, trained volunteers and county offices. It reaches into every Texas county to address local priority needs and to extend the latest research to the people of Texas. Some of the major efforts are in mitigating drought impacts; conserving water use in homes, landscapes and production agriculture; improving emergency management; enhancing food security; and protecting human health through education about diet, exercise, and disease prevention and management.

SUPERIOR SERVICE

Faculty and staff of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service received the agency's Superior Service Award during a virtual ceremony on Jan. 22. Denton County personnel were recognized for their hard work. The Superior Service Award is the agency's highest award, recognizing personnel who provide outstanding performance in education or other services to the organization and Texas residents.

Janet Laminack, horticulture agent, Denton County, was recognized for her strength in coordinating volunteers, identifying needs and connecting resources to clientele.

Denton County's Lake Dallas ISD 4-H Program Team is responsible for an innovative, interdisciplinary, multi-year partnership between Denton County 4-H and the Lake Dallas Independent School District, LDISD. Started in 2015 as an afterschool 4-H club, the partnership became the model for the Texas 4-H Champion School program. In 2018, the LDISD partnership grew with expansion to a new 6th-8th grade 4-H class. This was followed in 2019 by advanced science 8th grade students experiencing live research with scientists at Texas A&M AgriLife's Dallas Center.

Team members include Courtney Davis, county director, Tarrant County; Janet Laminack, horticulture agent, Denton County; Zach Davis, Ag/NR agent, Denton County; Derrick Bruton, 4-H youth development program specialist, Dallas; Colleen Carpenter, 4-H program coordinator, Denton County; Randall Caldwell, Lake Dallas Middle School; Beth Sharum and Tammie Gurley, Denton County Master Gardener Association.



HORTICULTURE

Our Master Gardeners got creative with a way to socially distance while celebrating their Class of 2020 graduating interns. Veteran members went door to door, delivering graduation certificates and cheering on our 34 newest members. The Class of 2020 made it halfway through, before having to switch to a virtual format for the remainder of the classes. They also managed, despite the pandemic, to each complete a minimum of 50 hours of volunteer service, with 9 completing over 100 hours and 1 completing over 300 hours.

With the graduation complete for the 2020 class, our Master Gardeners are busy training the new Class of 2021. This class kicked off on January 26th with 32 interns. This 14 week training course will be conducted virtually this year.

Agent Laminack went on a tour of the hydroponics lab at the Dallas AgriLife Center with producers who are starting a hydroponic vegetable operation in Sanger called Texas Green Star.

Our Master Gardener and Master Naturalist leadership worked with Agent Laminack to create protocols so that our volunteers can safely return to service.

Our Master Gardeners helped plant 38,000 onions and were also able to harvest some winter crops at Shiloh Field for donation to food pantries. More raised beds were built, bringing the total to ninety-seven. These additions will help increase production of vegetables for donation.



AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

In January, ag producers across the county were surveyed via mail and email to gauge ag production dollars for the county. Numbers were gathered and compiled by the Extension office and sent into the Ag Economics department at Texas A&M University. Typically the Denton County Ag Committee meets in person to discuss this annual Ag Increment Report, but instead found a way to collect the information virtually due to social distancing guidelines.



BETTER LIVING FOR TEXANS

Our Better Living for Texans Agent has been busy providing virtual programs. These fun programs are a great way to learn about nutrition and physical activity.

Towards the end of January, Ann Windle School for Young Children in Denton ISD, kicked off their Walk Across Texas program. Forty-four teachers are currently participating and committed to this 8 week walking program in hopes of bettering their overall health. This is a school wide event and teachers are able to hold each other accountable by increasing daily physical activity goals.

Another program that Denton County organizations may be interested in doing is our Online Fresh Start Series. This is offered to adults and is free of charge. In this 5-week program, attendees will learn about food safety, meal planning and MyPlate, along with simple nutritious recipes. The best part about this online series is that it is self-paced and can be done in the comfort of your own home.

If your organization is interested in learning more about this opportunity, feel free to reach out to our BLT Agent, Jessica Small @ 940-349-2891.

Lastly, we encourage you to follow our Facebook page titled: Denton County Healthy Happenings. We post healthy affordable recipes, nutrition articles, videos, physical activity tips and more each week for your convenience.