

Making a Difference

2022 Starr County Annual Report

The Starr County AgriLife Extension Program is driven by a program development framework that includes various committees that actively work with local Extension Staff to provide meaningful educational programs and activities for the residents of Starr County. Included in this report are some of the highlights of such activities and the impact they had on the community.

Beef 706

The purpose of this program was to demonstrate to beef cattle producers, the feedlot performance of south Texas feeder cattle and the economics of producing beef past the initial segment of the industry, which is the cow/calf operation, as well as gain a better understanding of the importance of cattle breed selection to improve quality of carcass value in their herds.

The Beef 706 Program showed the participating beef cattle producers some of the complexities and economic issues associated within the beef cattle industry. At the start of the program, cattle prices were increasing and continued to do so, and this helped the profit margins at the conclusion of the feeding period. Testimony provided from the participants mentioned that all left the program with a better understanding of beef cattle breeds and how they impact carcass quality and value and also how their management practices at the ranch ultimately have an impact on the beef that is being produced on the rail. Participants also had a better understanding of the profit margins faced at each level of production. The difference between profit and loss for both feed yards, packers, and retailers were just as narrow for them as it was for the cow-calf producer and based on many variables such as weather, feed cost, demand, and transportation costs.



Starr County 4-H – Making a Difference

The Starr County 4-H Program witnessed a 50% increase in volunteer enrollment. The enrollment increase is attributed to effective volunteer management.

Livestock projects continue to be the most popular, followed photography, foods and nutrition, horticulture and community service. Popular 4H Contests include Ag Product ID, Food Show/Challenge, Photography and Fashion Sensation.

Year	Club Members	School Enrichment	Special Interest	Total Enrollment
2020	281	1,189	1,000	2,571
2020	290	0	0	290
2022	250	1,182	12	1,444



Beef Cattle Management and Profitability

Limited resource agriculture producers have suffered from financial situations due to low market prices, seasonable droughts, and depleting government assistance programs for many years. This may be because of language barriers in communication which has kept these producers from increasing their knowledge. In general, these alternatives and sustainable production practices could enhance profitability of farming and ranching operations and maximize fluctuation in farm income to improve the economic well-being which may improve the quality of life of limited-resource farmers and ranchers. A total of twelve (12) educational program were conducted to assist local limited resource producers. Over two hundred (200) producers participated in programs that focused managing cow-calf pair operations, livestock nutrition management, increasing small ruminants, soil fertility health, integrated pest management, controlling feral hogs, and livestock cattle selection.



Cooking Well for Healthy Blood Pressure

Cooking Well for Healthy Blood Pressure is a Healthy South Texas program designed to provide participants with resources to gain knowledge and behavior skills through dietary modifications and other lifestyle factors to help reduce high blood pressure in individuals with pre-hypertension, hypertension, and a desire to prevent or delay hypertension.

The program was planned, marketed, implemented, evaluated, and interpreted with collaboration from the Rio Grande City Public Library. The program was presented at the library, over a three-week period in November 2022. Testimony provided by the participants mentioned that they were able to identify associated risks of continued high blood pressure, they were able to identify food choices found beneficial in reducing high blood pressure, and they had learned how to prepare recipes that have less sodium, fat, and sugar by incorporating herbs and spices. Participants also stated they had a better understanding on how to read and compare nutrition labels while making food product decisions.



Better Living for Texans Program

Better Living for Texans (BLT) program offers food and nutrition education programs to SNAP recipients, applicants, and other low-income audiences that help participants increase their consumption and access to fruits and vegetables, be more physically active, improve food security status, and prevent risk factors for chronic disease such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. BLT programs targeted adult and youth citizens.

During 2021-2022, **1,070** adults participated; **325** adults completed *A Fresh Start to a Healthier You*, **49** adults completed *Get the facts* series and **83** completed *Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities* Series and 5 active community gardens.

Learn, Grow, Eat & Go!; A ten session program developed to engage youth (3rd graders) and their families in school gardens, vegetable recipe tasting, classroom activities, physical activities, and take-home family stories. **246** youth participated and completed Learn, Grow, Eat and Go Series at Delia Gonzales Garcia Elementary and General Ricardo Sanchez Elementary.



Working On Wellness Environment

In 2022, the Working on Wellness Environments (WOWE) team continued working with the City of Rio Grande City to complete their Comprehensive Master Plan and picked up eight different community development projects with the Parks and Recreation Department, the City of Roma, the Rio Grande City Public Library, the Starr County Wellness Coordinator and with a Starr County Youth Group.

EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE
Providing Solutions