



TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION

FAMILY &
COMMUNITY HEALTH

2024 REPORT

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HELPING TEXANS THRIVE

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service provides 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.



ABOUT FAMILY AND COMMUNITY HEALTH

Chronic diseases account for eight of the 10 leading causes of death in Texas and nearly 90% of U.S. health care costs. By implementing certain lifestyle behaviors — such as engaging in regular physical activity, eating a healthy diet, maintaining a healthy body weight and not smoking — millions of Texans could prevent or delay the onset of some of the deadliest and costliest diseases, including heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes and other life-threatening conditions. Most adults and youth, unfortunately, do not achieve the minimal standards of physical activity and healthy eating required for chronic disease prevention. Additionally, accidents (unintentional injuries), another leading cause of death in Texas, cut short and negatively impact the lives of hundreds of thousands of Texans every year.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service recognizes that education plays a vital role in preventing premature deaths, reducing health care costs and improving the quality of life for Texas' growing population. For over 100 years, the agency has improved lives by delivering innovative science-based solutions and education at the intersection of health, agriculture and environment in communities across the state. Healthy Living, one of AgriLife Extension's five strategic plan priority areas, is addressed by the agency's Family and Community Health program, a network of subject matter academic units (Family and Community Health, Nutrition and Food Science, and Healthy South Texas), local educators (County Extension Agents) and trained volunteers (Master Wellness Volunteers and Healthy Texas Youth Ambassadors).

AgriLife Extension's Family and Community Health, FCH, program helps Texans better their lives through science-based educational programs designed to improve the overall health and well-being of individuals, families and communities. Programs are developed by content experts and delivered throughout the state by local educators and volunteers with support and direction from regional program leaders, unit heads and AgriLife Extension's associate director for Health, Families and Youth programs. Through these educational programs, AgriLife Extension seeks to reduce common risk factors that negatively impact quality of life and contribute to premature death.

Through a coordinated approach with key partners across the state, AgriLife Extension reached millions of Texas adults and youth in 2024 with educational programs and resources that not only brought greater awareness to vitally important health and safety issues, but also equipped participants with the knowledge and skills needed to implement healthy lifestyle behaviors such as regular physical activity, healthy dietary choices, stress reduction techniques and occupant safety practices that are known to improve overall health and well-being.

We hope you enjoy learning about the reach and impact of AgriLife Extension's Family and Community Health program on the state's growing population, and our continued commitment to helping Texas thrive.



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SUMMARY OF 2024 FCH IMPACTS



ECONOMIC IMPACT

The estimated economic benefit of FCH health and wellness programs totaled more than **\$144.8 million**.

Health Outreach

Howdy Health, a public facing website containing FCH health programs and resources, achieved **8,759,061** page views, while total FCH website views exceeded 11.5 million.

Active Living

FCH educators engaged **45,900** adults and youth in in-depth active living programs that improved participants' physical activity levels and health outcomes.

Nutrition Education

FCH educators and volunteers conducted 14,663 educational activities focused on healthy nutrition that resulted in **492,545** direct contacts.



41,810 adults and youth on **3,672** teams logged **4.6** million miles during the Walk Across Texas program.



**Health Education
Volunteers**

7,313 FCH volunteers contributed 217,419 hours — valued at more than \$7.2 million — resulting in **407,920** direct educational contacts.

**Early Childhood
Health and Safety**

83,501 early childhood educators enrolled in **579,868** online training courses.

**Mental Health
and Well-Being**

FCH faculty and staff conducted 541 mental health educational activities for Texans, totaling nearly **20,000** clock hours.

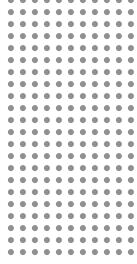
**Accident and
Injury Prevention**

4,177 driver/passenger safety trainings were conducted, reaching **73,961** Texans with potentially lifesaving information.



2,761,143 direct educational contacts made statewide.

Indirect contacts via website views, newsletters, social media, etc., exceeded 12.3 million.



2024 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Active Living

AgriLife Extension Family and Community Health educators and volunteers conducted 3,372 educational events on various active living topics that resulted in 161,515 direct contacts. Promotional events and newsletters reached an additional 175,779 contacts for a combined 2024 total of **337,324** contacts. The following programmatic highlights illustrate how AgriLife Extension’s educational programs positively impact the health and well-being of Texans.

Walk Across Texas

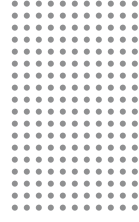
Walk Across Texas, WAT, promotes an active lifestyle by encouraging teams to track their physical activity. Supported by locally sponsored challenges, the program engages communities year-round. In fiscal year 2024, 162 counties participated, with 18,848 adults and 22,962 youth logging 4.6 million miles. Participants increased activity by 1.4 sessions and 17.3 minutes per week, with nearly 20% more meeting activity recommendations by the program's end. Since 1996, it has reached more than 750,000 participants, showcasing statewide behavioral and economic impacts.

Walk Through Texas History

Walk Through Texas History, WTTH, promotes an active lifestyle and explores Texas' heritage through team-based physical activity tracking. Despite being online, it fosters community engagement through locally sponsored challenges with events and activities. In FY 2024, 1,504 adults logged 119,297 miles across 17 counties, forming 303 teams. Participants increased activity by 1.1 sessions and 9.1 minutes per week, with nearly 20% more meeting activity recommendations by the program's end. Since 2020, it has engaged over 3,500 participants, highlighting its health, community and cultural impact.

“Walk Across Texas provided structure and goals for my fitness journey ... I am thankful this program got me to walk more. I feel better mentally, physically, and have more energy.”

“I benefited from it [Walk Through Texas History program] because it caused me to be more active ... I have never walked before this much but I absolutely love how refreshing it is and I'm going to be doing it a lot more. It also made me a lot more aware to be more focused on going outdoors and being active.”



Balancing Food & Play

A school enrichment program for children in third through fifth grades, Balancing Food & Play promotes lifelong healthy behaviors through nutrition, physical activity and family engagement. Based on MyPlate and the Social Cognitive Model, it engages children in fun and creative ways to develop healthy habits and learn about nutrition and physical activity. In FY 2024, 16 Texas counties implemented the program, with 1,451 students. Evaluation results indicate that students increased their physical activity levels and fruit consumption

while decreasing screen time and intake of sugar-sweetened beverages.

A Matter of Balance

AgriLife Extension’s Healthy Aging programming helps provide education, resources and support to older Texans, their caregivers and the professionals who serve them. One such program, A Matter of Balance, helps older adults increase their physical activity and reduce their risk for falling, the leading cause of unintentional injury death in the state. In FY 2024, 243 older Texans participated in A Matter of Balance.

Participants showed a significant increase in confidence and physical activity. Studies show that participants in A Matter of Balance save an estimated \$1,249 in health costs in the 12 months following completion of the series. For FY 2024 program year, that is almost \$303,500 in savings.

“ I fell about two weeks ago. I used what I learned in class to protect myself and was able to pull myself up.”



“ Balancing Food & Play has had an amazing response with students. They love all the interactive games and activities. They help remind each other to make better food choices during lunchtime and to get off their phones and online games after school and on the weekends.”



Nutrition

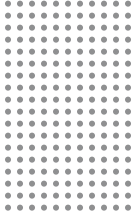
AgriLife Extension Family and Community Health educators and volunteers conducted 14,663 educational events on nutrition topics resulting in 492,545 direct contacts. Promotional events and newsletters reached an additional 378,916 contacts for a combined 2024 total of **871,461** contacts. Nutrition programs equip participants with the knowledge and skills needed to make healthy choices that lead to improved health outcomes for adults and youth. The following examples illustrate how AgriLife Extension's programs impact lives in meaningful ways.

Better Living for Texans

AgriLife Extension's Better Living for Texans Program, BLT, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education, SNAP-Ed, focuses on increasing fruit and vegetable consumption, promoting healthier eating patterns, increasing physical activity, adopting food resource management skills, and improving food safety practices. In FY 2024, the program reached more than 1.8 million limited-resource individuals through direct and indirect education; policy, systems, and environmental change initiatives; and social marketing.

BLT partnered with 314 community organizations across 183 counties and received more than \$7.8 million in funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission. The program's impact includes significant increases in fruit and vegetable consumption among participants, with 72% using MyPlate for food choices and 85% using nutrition labels. Additionally, 40% of participants met guidelines for moderate physical activity and 81% improved their knowledge of growing fruits and vegetables.

BLT reached 61,875 adults and youth through 16,883 sessions at 1,098 sites through direct in-person education and reached 1,759,995 contacts through newsletters, health fairs, social media and other channels.



Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program

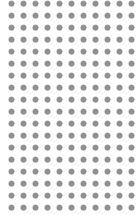
The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, EFNEP, aims to support young families and youth with limited resources by providing practical lessons in nutrition, food preparation, budget management and food safety. The program focuses on those most at risk of hunger and food insecurity, helping them improve their eating behaviors and healthy food habits. In FY 2024, EFNEP made significant strides, with 95% of participants making positive

changes in their diet, 50,470 youth educational contacts and 6,444 families enrolled. The program also benefited from the contributions of 1,318 volunteers who completed 14,660 hours of service valued at \$468,240. EFNEP's adult program emphasizes hands-on experiences to enhance food budgeting, eating habits and food safety, leading to increased meal preparation at home, better portion control and more physical activity. The youth program targets low-income school-age children, offering

engaging lessons on nutrition and food safety through various educational activities.

92% of participants improved their food resource management, 81% enhanced their food safety practices and 54% increased their physical activity.





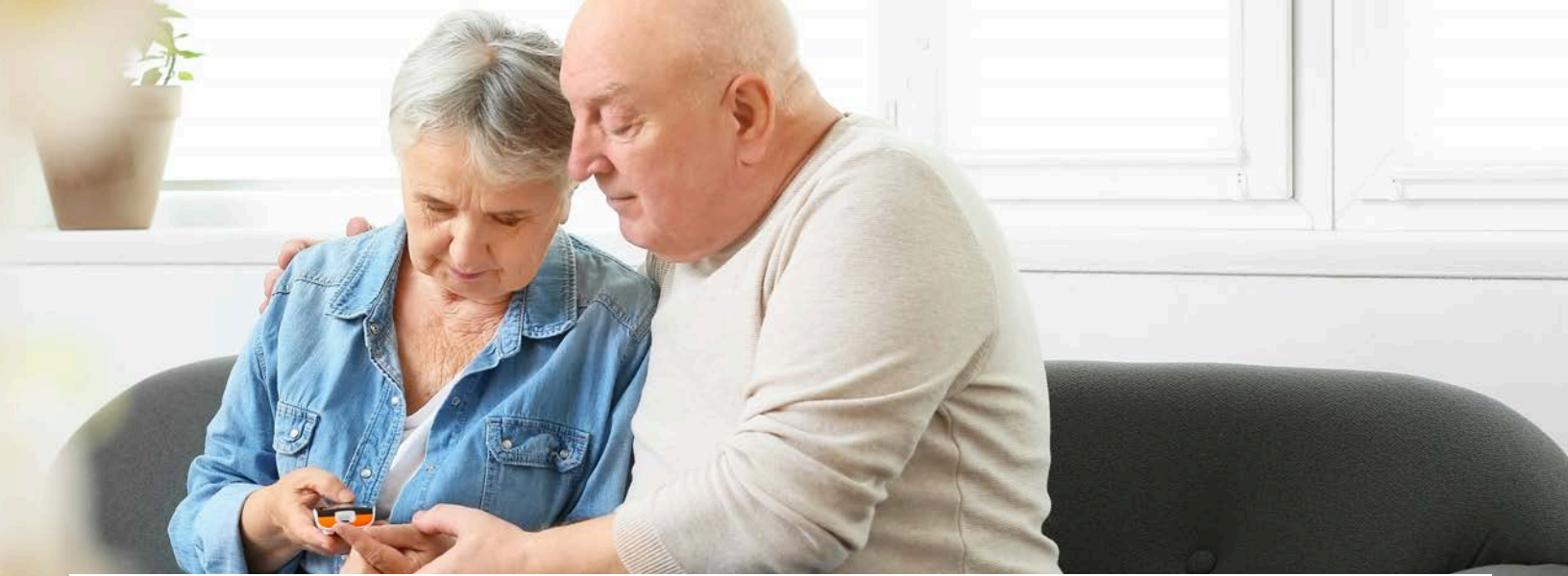
Dinner Tonight

AgriLife Extension's Dinner Tonight program aims to provide healthy recipes for Texans and increase self-efficacy in meal planning, healthy cooking techniques and food safety. The program offers dynamic recipe cards, high-resolution photos, videos and diverse, filterable recipe categories. It emphasizes food safety with tips for prepping, cooking and storing food, and provides evidence-based best practices. The program includes in-person and virtual cooking school demonstrations, enhanced by web-based continuing education resources. It targets mealtime

decision-makers, aiming to increase their confidence in meal planning, healthy cooking techniques and food safety practices. The program's impact extends beyond participants to their families, co-workers and friends. In FY 2024, the Dinner Tonight program had 4,378 participants and reported significant improvements in a variety of behaviors. Approximately 59% of participants increased their confidence in meal planning and nearly 61% felt more confident in modifying recipes to reduce salt, sugar and fat content.

Notably, 98.9% of surveyed participants reported that they or their families benefited from the program.





Chronic Disease Prevention and Management

In 2024, AgriLife Extension Family and Community Health educators and volunteers conducted 1,613 educational events resulting in 67,359 direct contacts. Combined with promotional events and newsletters, **125,925** total contacts were made through programs that seek to prevent and manage deadly and costly chronic diseases impacting Texans. The following programs illustrate the breadth and depth of programs offered throughout the state.

Diabetes Management

AgriLife Extension's diabetes programming aims to address and educate Texans on diabetes. With 7.1 million Texans having prediabetes and 2.5 million diagnosed with diabetes, the annual cost for diabetes care in Texas reaches \$25.6 billion. The agency's diabetes programming emphasizes the importance of diabetes management to reduce health care costs and improve quality of life. Programs such as Do Well, Be Well with Diabetes, ¡Sí Yo Puedo!, and Wisdom, Power, Control aim to improve blood glucose management through comprehensive curricula aligned with the American Diabetes Association Standards of Care. In FY 2024, diabetes education programs reached more than 8,700 educational and other contacts, teaching participants the skills to better manage their diabetes and to effectively reduce the risk of developing diabetes. Lifetime economic benefits are estimated at \$5.3 million. An evaluation study with 242 participants who completed the

comprehensive program showed significant improvements in their confidence and self-care behaviors.

Cooking Well Programs

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service developed a set of Cooking Well programs as an educational approach for preventing diet-related chronic diseases across the state. Through hands-on recipe demonstrations, four Cooking Well programs aim to improve participants' confidence in healthy food preparation skills targeting concepts like diabetes management, healthy blood pressure, healthy cultural cuisines and safe meal preparation. In FY 2024, there were 1,325 participants in 114 Cooking Well series across the state of Texas. The programs proved to meet the needs of participants, as 97.3% (n=866) reported they or their family benefited from participating in the Cooking Well program and 99% of those responding (n=937) reported they would recommend the program to others.

More than half of the participants (52.9%, n=494) reported an increase in confidence in preparing meals and snacks at home, while 45.8% (n=427) increased their confidence in modifying recipes to reduce salt, sugar and fat content. Additionally, Cooking Well program outcomes demonstrate that the participants increased the amount of fruit (44.9%, n=424) and vegetables (47.3%, n=447) they consumed in a day post-program series.

“ I am enjoying the recipes and experimenting with freezing or making alternate meals with some of the recipes. I learned that there are many easy and quick adjustments you can make to a recipe that make a big difference in reducing carbs, fats and sodium.”



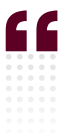
HealthTalk Express

The HealthTalk Express program provides health presentations in 30 minutes or less using a persuasive public speaking approach that informs community members about important health topics and empowers them to take action. The goal of the program is to help Texans know their risks, motivate them to take action, and make healthy choices to improve overall quality of life and reduce the likelihood of getting a chronic disease. Modules in the program range from preventing diabetes to reducing stress to maintaining a healthy life balance. In FY 2024, 759 adults in 27 counties were reached using the HealthTalk Express program. More than 90% of participants agreed to take future action to prevent a chronic disease, and 97% of participants intend to use the information from the HealthTalk Express presentation to improve their personal health.

Weight Management and Healthy Lifestyle Programs

AgriLife Extension offers several programs that help participants manage their weight through adoption of healthy lifestyle

behaviors. Program participants are supported by Extension agents as they work to set goals and monitor their progress. Through these programs, participants learn about the importance of physical activity and nutrition for improved health. In FY 2024, 471 actively participated in Step Up, Scale Down; Maintain No Gain; or StrongPeople™ Strong Bodies programs. 117 program participants reported decreasing their weight during the program and average weight loss for participants was 10.9 pounds. The programs also proved to meet the needs of participants: 97.9% (n=286) of the participants responding to a post-program survey reported they or their family benefited from participating in the program, and 99.7% of those responding (n=291) reported they would recommend the program to others. 109 participants (36.7%) self-reported their health improved after the program.



I have taken more action to read food labels, make an effort in choosing the better option, and taking time to get more fruits and veggies in my diet.”

Texas AgrAbility

The Texas AgrAbility program helps farmers and ranchers with disabling or chronic health conditions to start or stay engaged in agriculture operations. The program offers one-on-one consultations, referrals to resources, assistive equipment recommendations, assessments and education through online courses for health practitioners working with rural populations and farmers and ranchers with disabilities. Since 2012, 70% of AgrAbility clients have been military veterans. The program was featured on the latest season of Around Texas with Chancellor John Sharp. In FY 2024, 310 direct one-on-one consultations were conducted with farmers and ranchers with disabilities and their service providers, 66 occupational therapy students were educated in assistive technology for farmers and ranchers, 16 onsite farm assessments were conducted with occupational therapy doctoral students, and \$65,000 in equipment for farmers and ranchers with disabilities was provided through the Texas Workforce Commission Vocational Rehabilitation.

Early Childhood Health and Safety

In 2024, AgriLife Extension Family and Community Health faculty and staff supported the child care workforce in Texas and beyond by reaching nearly 90,000 early childhood educators, ECEs, through online and face-to-face trainings focused on the latest research in health and safety, nutrition, and child development. ECEs enrolled in over **579,000** online courses, enabling them to complete state-mandated training requirements and increase their knowledge of best practices in the early childhood field. AgriLife Extension's ECE workforce trainings directly support 76,000 jobs with an annual wage base of \$2.7 billion.

Promoting Early Education Quality

Quality matters in early childhood education. Children who receive high-quality care develop better language, math and social skills; exhibit fewer behavior problems; and tend to be better prepared for entrance into school. Having a well-trained early childhood workforce is essential to providing the high-quality care and education that children need to reach their developmental potential. AgriLife Extension's Promoting Early Education Quality, PEEQ, program provides a range of educational activities and resources designed to enhance the quantity and quality of early care and education services available to Texas families. These include professional development opportunities for ECEs and administrators; training for industry-adjacent professionals who provide support for ECE programs;



These classes are just amazing ... please keep up the good work of [providing] quality training classes. Thank you."



and tools to strengthen the ECE policies, systems and environments, PSE, which impact young children's health and development.

AgriLife Extension's PEEQ online training program, one of the leading online learning platforms for ECEs in the nation, offers more than 200 courses to ECEs in Texas and beyond. In FY 2024, 83,501 ECEs enrolled in 579,868 online courses and completed over 417,000. Since 2014, the program has recorded nearly four million online course completions by ECEs from across the U.S., which is equivalent to more than seven million clock hours of training. In addition, AgriLife Extension provided instructor-led training to nearly 5,000 ECE professionals through a combination of in-person and webinar-based professional development events.

To support ECE professionals in adopting some of the best practices they learned in these trainings, faculty and staff trained 66

individuals, including Texas Master Gardener and Texas Master Naturalist volunteers and/or County Extension Agents, on strategies to increase access to naturalized outdoor learning environments in ECE programs. An additional 37 individuals, including local health department staff, completed the required training to serve as Technical Assistance, TA, Consultants for ECE facilities participating in the Texas Healthy Building Blocks Recognition System. This system is an obesity prevention program powered by the evidence-based Go NAPSACC toolkit, which guides ECEs through self-assessment, goal setting, adopting changes and, when they reach certain milestones, recognition. In FY 2024, 23 ECE facilities participated in the program, with eight earning recognition in one or more of the seven available recognition areas. The expansion of TA Consultant support means that in FY 2025 the program will be available in 51 counties.



Accident and Injury Prevention

In 2024, AgriLife Extension Family and Community Health educators and volunteers conducted 1,876 educational events resulting in 95,323 direct contacts. Combined with promotional events and newsletters, **105,922** total contacts were made through programs that seek to improve community safety by preventing injuries and accidental deaths. The following programs illustrate the potentially lifesaving work being done across the state of Texas.

Passenger Safety and KidSafe Initiatives

The Passenger Safety and KidSafe Initiatives project is the largest statewide occupant protection program in Texas, providing education and resources on occupant protection, child passenger safety, distracted driving and speeding, and overall safety in and around vehicles. In FY 2024, Passenger Safety and KidSafe delivered over 800 educational programs reaching 39,437 participants, including parents and caregivers, pre-K to 12th grade students, law enforcement employees, medical personnel, municipal courts, and first responders. Over 3,500 car seat inspections were conducted and 2,760 child safety seats were distributed to families in need. The economic benefit of the proper use of child safety seats for the FY 2024 participants is estimated at \$7.0 million.

“ I am very grateful for the car seat I received and the education on how to use it. I was just in a serious crash and it saved my little boy's life!”

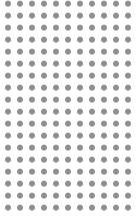
“ I am so glad I stopped at the event today. I thought I was doing everything right but I wasn't. I feel like my kids are safe now and I know now how to do things the right way. I don't want to think about what could have happened if we had been in a crash the way they were before the event.”

Watch UR BAC

AgriLife Extension's Watch UR BAC project focuses on youth alcohol and impairment traffic safety

education for audiences ranging from sixth grade to age 25. Alcohol and other drug impairment education is presented in a variety of settings with age-appropriate information to promote safe, healthy choices and bring greater awareness to the unfortunate consequences of poor decisions. In FY 2024, the Watch UR BAC team conducted over 400 educational events reaching a total of 53,511 participants.

“ I will apply this information not only to my life but to the lives of others. I want to be the person that saves a loved one's life even if it is uncomfortable or scary to do so.”

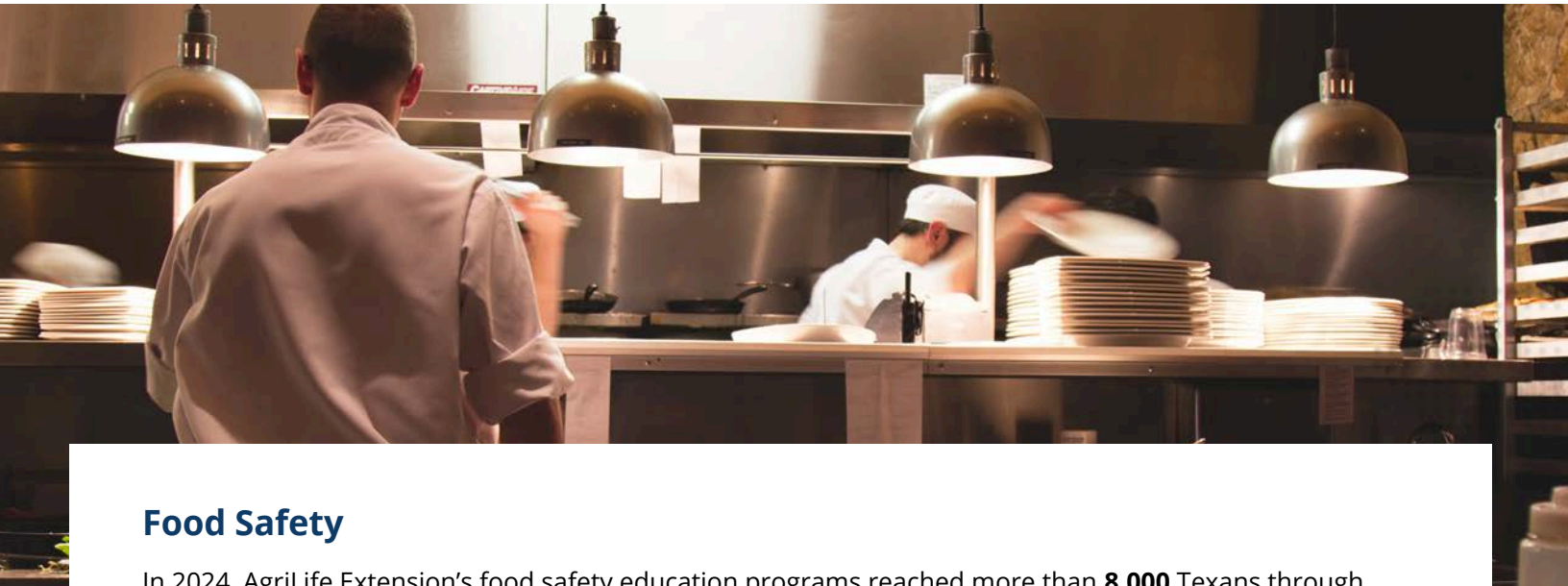


Silver Drivers, Safe Texans

AgriLife Extension's Silver Drivers, Safe Texans project focuses on traffic safety for at-risk road users such as older drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians. Older drivers are staying on the road far longer than ever before and are faced

with ever-evolving technological advances in vehicles and changes in their bodies as they age, which create unique risks. Slower reaction time, changes in vision and hearing, physical and cognitive limitations, medications, and higher likelihood of

injury in a crash all put older drivers in a higher risk category. In FY 2024, Silver Drivers, Safe Texans conducted over 200 educational events reaching more than 16,900 participants.



Food Safety

In 2024, AgriLife Extension's food safety education programs reached more than **8,000** Texans through online and face-to-face methods. Programs provide comprehensive training to food service managers and other employees, with a collective annual wage base of \$213 million.

Food Safety Education Program

Led by AgriLife Extension, the Food Safety Education Program aims to reduce foodborne illnesses by providing mandatory training for food service workers and educational resources for consumers, hunters, cottage food producers and farmers market participants. The program includes a Certified Food Managers course and a Food Handlers course, which is accredited by the Texas Department of State Health Services. These courses cover essential safety

principles related to food preparation, storage, personal hygiene, facility maintenance and pest management. The program also offers online and in-person education, with more than 8,000 participants in FY 2024, including 5,140 online and 2,892 face-to-face attendees. The program's impact is reflected in the high average test scores. Face-to-face participants had an average score increase of 15% and online participants had an average score increase of 11%.



We're grateful to have the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service right here in our community, providing quality, hands-on education that makes a real difference. With programs that support food safety, AgriLife equips residents and food preparers with practical tools they can use every day. Whether it's learning how to properly wash their hands, work with health inspectors, or how to avoid cross contamination, their resources are always accessible and relevant ... we're fortunate to benefit from their commitment to our community."



Mental Health and Well-Being

AgriLife Extension Family and Community Health educators conducted 541 educational events on various mental health topics that resulted in 12,046 direct contacts. Promotional events and newsletters reached an additional 2,769 contacts for a combined 2024 total of **14,815** contacts. The following programmatic highlights illustrate how AgriLife Extension’s educational programs positively impact the mental health and well-being of Texans.

Mental Health and Well-Being Programs

AgriLife Extension’s mental health and well-being programs provide individuals and families with practical knowledge and skills to prevent mental health crises, build resilience and promote overall well-being. These programs focus on raising awareness of mental health challenges and enhancing participants’ understanding of resilience-building, strategic self-care and stress management. They also provide information about

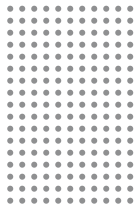
local, state and national resources, helping participants connect with additional support and encouraging the timely pursuit of professional assistance such as counseling when needed.

Through programs such as Mental Health First Aid, for both adults and youth; Stress Less with Mindfulness; Mindful SELF; and Building Resilience in All Texans, participants gain valuable tools and support to build healthier lives. A feedback survey from 378 participants indicates

that these programs are making a positive impact. 90% of respondents expressed satisfaction, with 60% completely satisfied. Furthermore, 90% found the information easy to understand and 93% found it helpful. Additionally, 87% plan to take action based on the trainings and 77.8% expect improvements in their mental health as a result of what they learned.



I am more hopeful and feel less helpless when I come to situations where I can recognize that someone may be struggling through a mental challenge and I have the unique opportunity to help them. After this course, I feel that I am much better equipped both with evidence-driven tools and with self-care techniques to be able to not only provide mental health first aid, but also remain cognizant in all areas of any interaction.”



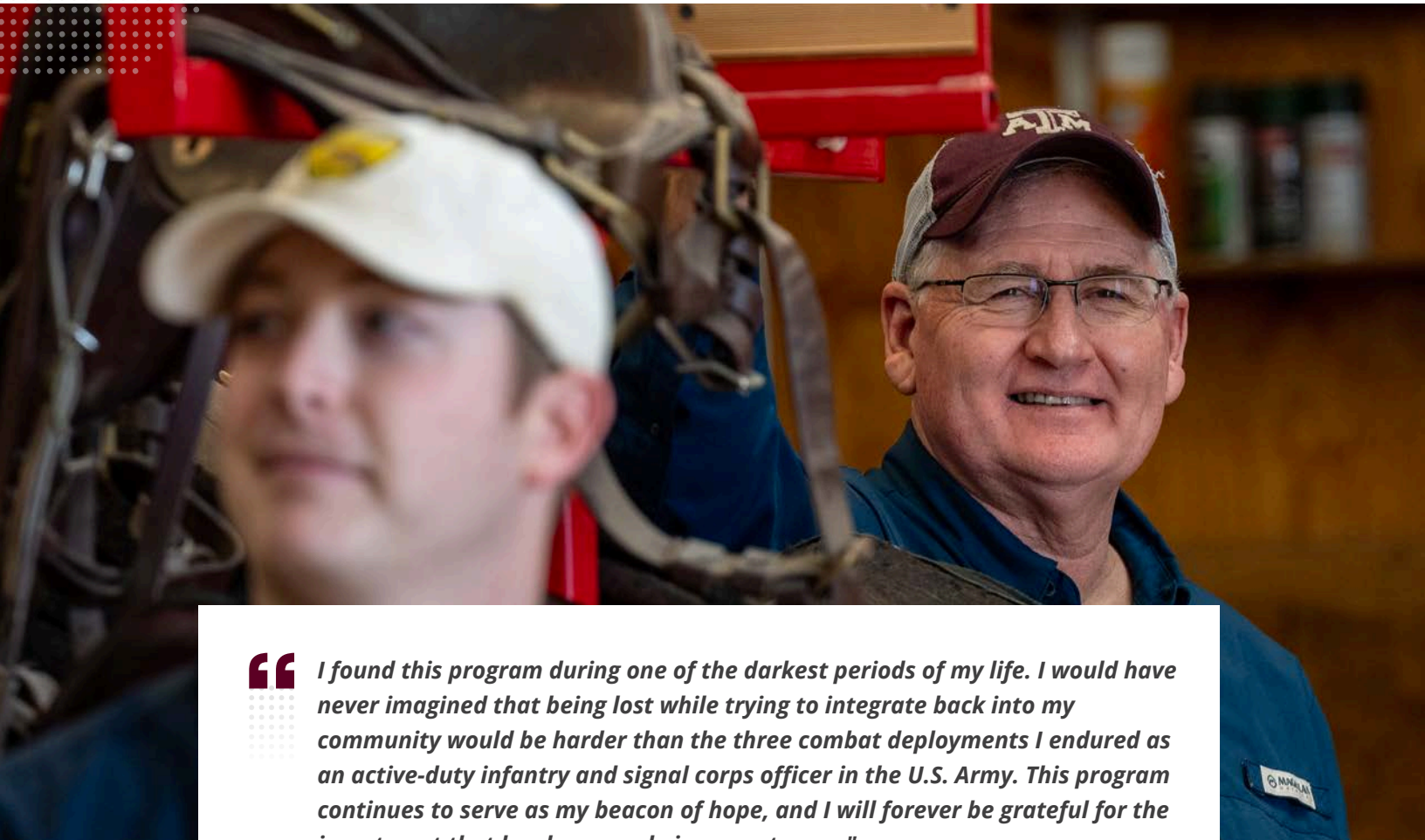
Workforce Development Programs

BattleGround to Breaking Ground

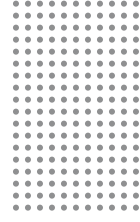
The BattleGround to Breaking Ground program, BGBG, is a four-phase program delivered through a hybrid in-person and online model to assist veterans, active-duty military, and other beginning farmers and ranchers to start or expand an agriculture operation. BGBG introduces participants to agriculture business ideas as well as business planning and funding resources in Phase 1, then

walks them through weekly modules to create an agriculture business plan in Phase 2. In Phase 3, participants gain agriculture production knowledge and skills through online courses and hands-on learning. Phase 1-3 graduates who are veterans/active-duty military are eligible for a \$1,000 stipend and can apply to the Phase 4: Mentor Training Program. Certified mentors are paid for conducting hands-on learning hours with Phase 3

participants. In FY 2024, 222 individuals participated in the program. Over the past three years, more than 600 participants either started farming or were trained to start farming through BGBG. An additional 183 participants improved their farming success through the program.



“ I found this program during one of the darkest periods of my life. I would have never imagined that being lost while trying to integrate back into my community would be harder than the three combat deployments I endured as an active-duty infantry and signal corps officer in the U.S. Army. This program continues to serve as my beacon of hope, and I will forever be grateful for the investment that has been made in our veterans.”

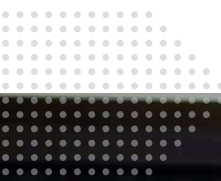


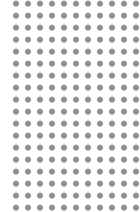
Horticultural Options in Plant Sciences Program

The Texas A&M Horticultural Options in Plant Sciences, HOPS, Certification program is a 32-week, post-secondary transition program for individuals with or without disabilities who are interested in training and a career in the horticulture industry. The program aims to help participants gain the skills and experience needed to

transition to competitive integrated employment in the horticulture industry. Launched in 2021, the program offers three specialized tracks: floral design, greenhouse/nursery plant production and landscape management. There were 17 program participants in FY 2024, with 94% graduation rate, 75% post-graduation competitive employment rate and 100% industry-recognized credential rate.

“What HOPS program means to me is opportunity. Without this program, I wouldn’t be here today. I’m so thankful for this opportunity to learn how to be independent and learn a lot about horticulture. I’m excited about taking what I’ve learned to my job opportunity.”





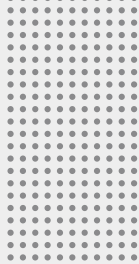
Work and College Opportunities

The Work and College Opportunities, WACO, program is a six-week summer residential program for young adults with or without disabilities. It provides development and instruction in professionalism, self-determination, self-advocacy, teamwork and other skills related to employment and college attendance. WACO program participants take specially designed classes on the Texas A&M University campus and are given the

opportunity to audit the Blinn College courses based on their career interests. Participants also gain work experience in the Bryan/College Station community. Emphasis areas include vocational skills, career exploration and independent living skills. There were 33 program participants in FY 2024, with a total of 6,600 contact hours.

“ I like getting the experience of both college and work because, in my third or fourth year of college, I want to get a job and try to live on my own. I’ve definitely learned a lot from participating in the WACO program.”





EMERGING PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

Emerging health issues provide a challenge for all Texas communities, shaped by a complex interaction of multiple factors that individuals and families must navigate to make choices for their optimal health. In response, Family and Community Health actively responds with innovative approaches to emerging health issues that better equip Texans with awareness, research-based knowledge and practical resources. The following programs and initiatives illustrate new and innovative approaches to help Texans thrive when it comes to their health and well-being.

Texas Active Policy, Research and Engagement Network

The Texas Active Policy, Research and Engagement Network, TAPREN, project aims to improve the health of Texans by promoting active living through community design. Supported by a \$200,000 contract with the Texas Department of State Health Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention State Physical Activity and Nutrition, SPAN, program, TAPREN focuses on developing a statewide coordinated system of assessment, training and technical assistance. By leveraging the AgriLife Extension dissemination network, the project supports state and local efforts to increase physical activity through community-centered design strategies.

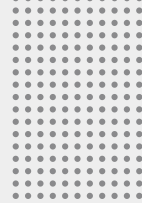
Texas Farmers, Ranchers and Educators Serving Healthy Texans and Reconnecting Agriculture to Youth in Schools

The Texas Farmers, Ranchers and Educators Serving Healthy Texans and Reconnecting Agriculture to Youth in Schools, FRESH TRAYS, program helps producers — farmers and ranchers — and schools, including early childcare centers, build connections to increase the amount of local fresh foods served to children across Texas. FRESH TRAYS is funded through a 3-year, \$1.1 million contract with the Texas Department of Agriculture.

The REACHing Well Project

Rural Texans can face tremendous individual, interpersonal and community concerns in the adoption of healthful lifestyles in the prevention of chronic disease. Despite previous attempts to resolve such concerns, unique challenges persist around healthful food and physical activity access and behavior, necessitating novel, innovative educational and policy, systems and environment, PSE, approaches. Funded in partnership with the Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity with the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, the REACHing Well Project is employing a novel systematic, translational — theory-to-practice — approach to sustain connectivity to community and cultural influences on personal, valued choices for individuals and their families.





Well Church Initiative

Faith communities, specifically local churches, are primed to serve an integral role in enhancing healthy lifestyles within Texas communities. Alongside religion being an important social determinant of health and human flourishing, churches provide important social capital, span socioeconomic and social stratifications, and provide leadership from clergy who are often deemed to be local health educators for emerging health issues. Churches can be geographically located across communities with important physical capital, reach the most rural and health-disparate populations, and provide key access points and partnerships in Public Health and County Extension efforts. In response, the Well Church Initiative, WCI, seeks to provide education and resources across the faith-placed to faith-based continuum in support of church environments, wellness ministries and clergy who are seeking to positively impact the health and wellness of their communities.

Get Outside!

The Get Outside! program encourages families to implement daily outdoor and nature experiences into their lives in bingo card format to help boost their health, happiness and time together. This program typically lasts five weeks and can be used in partnership with a variety of learning programs for children, such as child care centers, home-based child care providers, elementary classrooms, after-school programs and libraries. The Get Outside! program was successfully launched in 2024 in partnership with schools, libraries and after-school programs. Fifty-two families from four counties participated in the program by registering in Howdy Health and completing bingo activities daily in and around their homes. In the summer of 2024, Get Outside! was expanded for suitability with an early childhood audience, and the program continues to be piloted and evaluated for effectiveness. This focus on nature-related programming has led to multiple agency-wide early child care conferences and health summits held within the past year with similar themes.

Infectious Disease Prevention

The EXCITE project is an interagency agreement between the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Cooperative Extension System to engage Texas communities with holistic, infectious disease prevention education with a focus on primary prevention measures — nutrition and physical activity — and immunization that supports personal choice and autonomy.

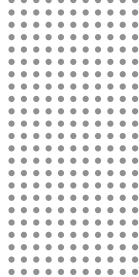
Community Conversations on Health

Funded by the Texas Department of State Health Services, DSHS, the Community Conversations on Health, CCoH, project sought to develop an innovative policy, systems, environment and education, PSE-E, approach to better facilitate rapid communication with rural communities to enhance AgriLife Extension's response with valuable health education programs and resources.

The Well Families Initiative

This family-focused initiative includes internal and external collaborations as well as newly created educational materials for families with young children that encourage active family engagement in positive health behaviors, such as regular physical activity, healthy meal preparation and so on. Through a multi-state collaboration, family engagement guides are being utilized for at-home use, with a section devoted to family health information and tips.

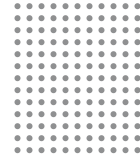




GRANTS AND CONTRACTS

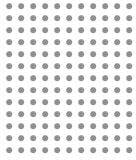
AgriLife Extension’s Family and Community Health program secured over **\$30.5 million** in grants and contracts in FY 2024 from various federal, state and foundation partners to develop, implement and evaluate innovative educational programs designed to improve the overall health and well-being of Texans.

PROJECT	FUNDER	FY 2024 AMOUNT	PURPOSE
BattleGround to Breaking Ground	United States Department of Agriculture, USDA	\$1,500,000	To help farmers and ranchers, mainly veterans and active-duty military, start or expand agriculture operations through in-person hands-on learning events, online courses and mentorships.
Better Living for Texans, BLT	United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, USDA FNS, and Texas Health and Human Service Commission, HHSC	\$7,883,836	To provide resources for the delivery of research and evidence-based nutrition, health and wellness knowledge to empower limited-resource individuals, families and communities to make positive changes for healthier lives.
CDC’s Bridge Access Immunization Program	Extension Foundation	\$72,000	To provide information about the CDC’s Bridge Access Immunization Program to the EFNEP audience.



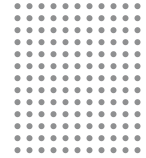
Clergy Health Education Program in Lifestyle Medicine	Ardmore Institute of Health, AIH	\$40,000	To develop a novel, virtual program in extension medicine education for clergy to assist in their knowledge, abilities and community engagement for infectious and chronic disease prevention.
Community Outreach Coordinators Project	Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities, TCDD	\$642,057	To plan, develop and implement accessible and inclusive programming efforts for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.
Community-Based Alzheimer's Disease Education	Texas Department of State Health Services, DSHS	\$135,000	To implement educational programming on Alzheimer's disease and related dementias in rural communities.
EXCITE Project	Extension Foundation	\$9,990	To provide rural communities in Texas with holistic infectious disease prevention education with specific focus on vaccine awareness and professional development for Extension practitioners.
Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, EFNEP	United States Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA-NIFA	\$4,500,000	To provide nutrition education for limited-resource families and youth across Texas. This funding provides resources for peer educators to provide nutrition education for over 6,000 adults and 50,000 youth each year.





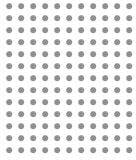
FRESH TRAYS	Texas Department of Agriculture, TDA	\$283,595	To support the Texas Farmers, Ranchers and Educators Serving Healthy Texans and Reconnecting Agriculture to Youth in Schools, FRESH TRAYS, program. The program, part of a three-year, \$1,164,600 grant, helps producers — farmers and ranchers — and schools build connections to increase the amount of local fresh foods served to children across Texas.
Healthy South Texas	Texas Legislature	\$2,143,200	Funded by the Texas Legislature, Healthy South Texas brings together Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas A&M University Health Science Center to focus on providing outreach and education for reducing preventable diseases and their consequences in the 27 southernmost counties in Texas.
Horticulture Options in Plant Sciences, HOPS	Texas Workforce Commission Vocational Rehabilitation, TWC-VR	\$297,500	To provide individuals with disabilities certification level course work and work-based learning opportunities in the fields of landscape management, greenhouse nursery and floral design. The HOPS program is a two-semester program and supports up to 15 students per year.





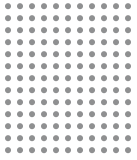
Obesity Prevention in Early Care and Education Settings	Texas Department of State Health Services, DSHS	\$232,500	To lead and expand Texas Healthy Building Blocks and other early childhood education health promotion efforts aligned with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Spectrum of Opportunities for Obesity Prevention in Early Care and Education Settings.
OneOp	U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Defense, USDA and DOD, through Auburn University	\$333,448	To develop and implement professional development for personnel working with and serving military families.
Passenger Safety and KidSafe	Texas Department of Transportation, TXDoT	\$1,078,920	To provide education and resources on occupant protection, child passenger safety, distracted driving and speeding, and overall safety in and around vehicles.
REACHing Well Project	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC	\$2,849,653	To enhance access and opportunities in Extension education for improved healthy nutrition and physical activity behavior in lifestyle prevention of chronic disease. Part of a five-year, \$5 million grant, the project works with churches, schools and early childhood education settings across Texas.





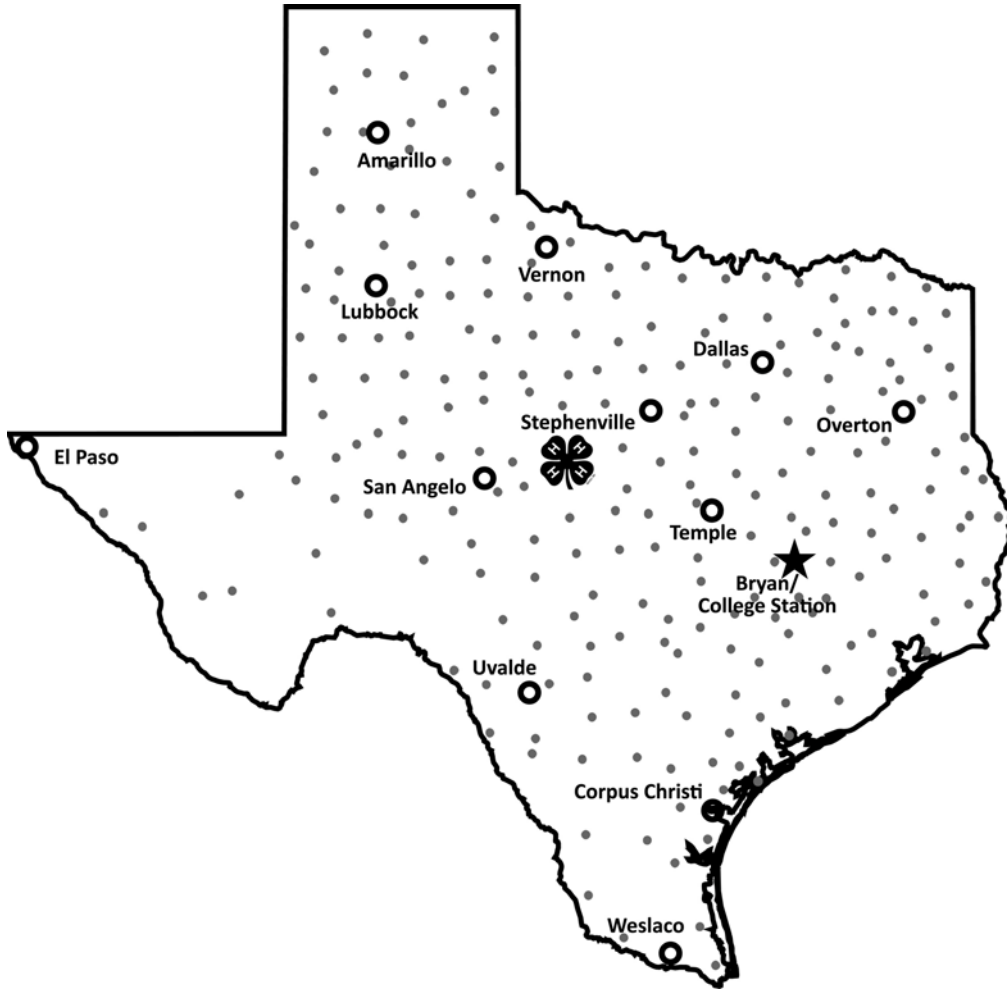
Silver Drivers, Safe Texans	Texas Department of Transportation, TXDoT	\$599,783	To provide traffic safety education focused on risky road users such as older drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians.
Success... Powered by You	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, HHS	\$999,999	To provide 18-to-24-year-olds with healthy relationship, financial and commonsense parenting education. Part of a five-year, ~\$5 million grant, these courses serve as a preventive measure against poor life outcomes for those living in a five-county region.
Supporting the Professional Development Needs of the Early Childhood Workforce	Texas Workforce Commission, TWC	\$5,153,233	To develop and implement training resources for the early childhood education workforce and provide access to free and low-cost online professional development trainings.
Texas Active Policy, Research and Engagement Network, TAPREN	Texas Department of State Health Services, DSHS	\$200,000	To support state and local efforts to increase physical activity through community-centered design strategies by leveraging the AgriLife Extension dissemination network.
Texas AgrAbility Worksite Assessments	Texas Workforce Commission Vocational Rehabilitation, TWC-VR	\$14,000	To support the Texas AgrAbility work-site assessment team to conduct farm/ranch worksite assessments.





<p>Texas AgrAbility</p>	<p>United States Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA-NIFA</p>	<p>\$183,840</p>	<p>To support the farming/ranching families to remain in production agriculture if a family member is or was impacted by a catastrophic accident or a chronic health condition. Texas AgrAbility project staff provide education to service providers for this population, provide work site assessments for farmers and ranchers to address accessibility, and recommend assistive technologies to help mitigate impact as well as address safety and secondary injury.</p>
<p>Watch UR BAC</p>	<p>Texas Department of Transportation, TXDoT</p>	<p>\$974,837</p>	<p>To provide youth alcohol and impairment traffic safety education, focusing on youth from sixth grade through age 25. Alcohol and other drug impairment education is presented in a variety of settings with age-appropriate information to promote safe, healthy choices and bring awareness to the unfortunate consequences of poor decisions.</p>
<p>Work and College Opportunities Program, WACO</p>	<p>Texas Workforce Commission Vocational Rehabilitation, TWC-VR</p>	<p>\$396,164</p>	<p>To provide a six-week summer transitional work and college-based program, in person and/or virtual.</p>
<p>Workforce Enhancement in Healthy Aging and Independent Living Collaborative</p>	<p>University of North Texas Health Science Center, UNTHSC</p>	<p>\$50,000</p>	<p>To support age- and dementia-friendly communities through professional development and training.</p>





- Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Centers
- ★ Headquarters at Texas A&M University
- ☘ Texas 4-H Conference Center
- Extension offices serving all 254 counties

HELPING TEXANS THRIVE, ONE HEALTHY CHOICE AT A TIME.

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