



TEXAS A&M  
**AGRI**LIFE  
EXTENSION

FAMILY &  
COMMUNITY HEALTH

# 2025 REPORT



# CONTENTS

<b>About Family and Community Health</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Summary of 2025 FCH Impacts</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2025 Program Highlights</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Emerging Programs and Initiatives</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Grants and Contracts</b>	<b>22</b>



# 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. A strong body of evidence shows that regular physical activity and healthy dietary patterns—along with maintaining a healthy body weight and avoiding tobacco use—play a critical role in preventing or delaying the onset of many of the most common and costly chronic diseases, including heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes. Yet most Texas adults and youth do not meet recommended standards for physical activity or healthy eating, placing them at increased risk for preventable illness and premature death. In addition, accidents (unintentional injuries), another leading cause of death in Texas, continue to cut short and negatively impact the lives of hundreds of thousands of Texans each year.

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

AgriLife Extension's FCH program helps Texans improve their health and well-being through evidence-based educational programs that support healthier behaviors across the lifespan. Programs are developed by content experts and delivered statewide by local educators and volunteers, with guidance and support from Regional Program Leaders, unit leaders, and AgriLife Extension's Associate Director for Health, Families and Youth Programs. Through these efforts, AgriLife Extension works to reduce common risk factors—such as poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and preventable injuries—that negatively affect 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 2025 with educational programs and resources that increased awareness of critical health and safety issues and equipped participants with the knowledge and skills needed to adopt healthier lifestyles. These efforts emphasized practical strategies for regular physical activity, nutritious food choices, stress management, and occupant safety—behaviors known to improve overall health and well-being. We invite you to learn more about the reach and impact of AgriLife Extension's Family and Community Health program and our continued commitment to helping Texas thrive.



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# SUMMARY OF 2025 FCH IMPACTS



## ECONOMIC IMPACT

The estimated economic benefit of FCH health and wellness programs totaled more than **\$217.4 million**.

### Health Outreach

Howdy Health, a public-facing website containing FCH health programs and resources, achieved **6,055,873** page views, while total FCH website views exceeded 6.8 million.

### Active Living

FCH educators engaged **54,994** 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 more than 21,100 educational activities focused on healthy nutrition that resulted in **1.4 million** direct contacts.



**51,763 adults and youth on 3,743 teams logged 6.4 million miles during the Walk Across Texas program.**



#### Health Education Volunteers

6,661 FCH volunteers contributed 206,562 hours (valued at > \$7.1 million) resulting in **159,945** direct educational contacts.

#### Early Childhood Health and Safety

90,714 early childhood educators enrolled in **404,335** online training courses.

#### Mental Health and Well-Being

FCH faculty, staff, and volunteers conducted more than 940 mental health educational activities for Texans, resulting in nearly **33,000** direct contacts.

#### Accident and Injury Prevention

3,916 driver and passenger safety events were conducted, reaching more than **87,000** Texans with potentially lifesaving information.



**2,166,947 direct educational contacts made statewide.**

Indirect contacts via website views, social media, etc. exceeded 13.1 million.





# 2025 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



## Active Living

In FY 2025, AgriLife Extension Family and Community Health educators and volunteers conducted more than 4,000 educational events on active living topics, resulting in over **264,500** direct 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 2025, 190 Texas counties participated, with 18,469 adults and 33,294 youth logging 6.4 million miles. Participants increased activity by 1.5 sessions and 15.8 minutes per week, with nearly 20% more meeting activity recommendations by the program's end. Since 1996, more than 830,000 Texans have participated in WAT, showcasing statewide behavioral and economic impacts.

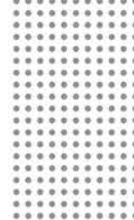
### Walk Through Texas History

Walk Through Texas History (WTHH) 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 2025, 693 adults logged 40,380 miles across 30 counties, forming 217 teams. Participants increased activity by 0.41 sessions and 3.58 minutes per week, with nearly 10% more meeting activity recommendations by the program's end. Since 2020, it has engaged over 4,800 participants, highlighting its health, community, and cultural impact.



*Participating in the Walk Across Texas program provided numerous benefits to me. It significantly improved my physical health by encouraging regular walking, which helped enhance my cardiovascular fitness, muscle strength, and overall well being. The program also provided a motivating goal, pushing me to stay consistent and achieve the challenge of walking the equivalent of 100 miles over 8 weeks. It fostered a sense of accomplishment as I reached each milestone and gave me a clear focus on staying active. Additionally, the program served as an excellent opportunity for family bonding as we walked together, supported each other, and enjoyed quality time outdoors. Overall, it was a rewarding experience that boosted my health and reinforced the importance of staying active and committed to long-term wellness."*





## Balancing Food & Play

A school-enrichment program for third through fifth grades, Balancing Food & Play promotes lifelong healthy behaviors through nutrition, physical activity, and family engagement. The program engages children in fun and creative ways to develop healthy habits and learn about nutrition and physical activity. In FY 2025, 25 Texas counties implemented the program, with 1,873 students. Evaluation results indicate that students increased their physical activity levels and fruit consumption, while decreasing screen time and intake of sugar-sweetened beverages.

## StrongPeople™ Strong Bodies

StrongPeople™ Strong Bodies (SPSB) is a community-based strength training program designed for midlife and older adults to improve overall physical health and functional fitness. The program features twice-weekly, 45–60 minute group sessions (8–12 participants) delivered over 12 or 24 weeks. Classes include a brief warm-up, two structured resistance-training regimens targeting major muscle groups using dumbbells, ankle

weights, and body weight, and a cool-down focused on flexibility and balance.

SPSB promotes increased muscle mass and strength, improved bone density, and reduced risk of chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, depression, and obesity, while also enhancing self-confidence, sleep, and vitality. In FY 2025, 291 participants across seven Texas counties took part. Outcomes were strong: 28.9% reported fewer days of poor physical health in the past month, 24.2% began exercising, and 100% would recommend the program. Additionally, 36% lost weight (averaging 5.7 pounds), and participants demonstrated measurable strength gains—such as an average 2-pound increase in bicep curl weight between Weeks 1 and 12.

**“** *This program not only helps my physical strength, but I also have support from people who keep each other accountable to show up to each class.”*

## 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 2025, 141 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 the FY 2025 program year, that is almost \$117,000 in savings.

**“** *I have become a lot more aware of my surroundings. I have found a lot of things that I need to change in my home/yard/garage.”*



**“** *Balancing Food & Play exposed students in a fun and informative way to the benefits of being active and choosing healthier foods. The benefits of this curriculum are immeasurable.”*





## Nutrition

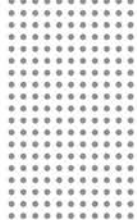
In FY 2025, AgriLife Extension Family and Community Health educators and volunteers conducted more than 21,100 educational events on nutrition topics, resulting in over **1.4 million** direct contacts. Nutrition programs equip participants with the knowledge and skills needed to make healthy choices 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), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) focused 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 2025, the program reached over 1.8 million limited-resource individuals through direct and indirect education, policy, systems, and environmental change initiatives, and social marketing. BLT partnered with 274 community organizations across 156 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 45% improved their knowledge of growing fruits and vegetables.

On July 4, 2025, the United States Congress passed a budget reconciliation bill eliminating federal SNAP-Ed funding and the BLT program. For the past 30 years, dedicated county-based agents and educators delivered programs that created tangible, lasting impacts and made a difference in the Texas communities served.





**BLT reached 57,657 adults and youth through 14,341 in-person direct education sessions, adopted 767 multi-level policy, systems, and environmental changes primarily through school and community gardening programs, and reached 1,784,378 contacts through newsletters, health fairs, social media, and other channels.**

“My son has always liked fruit, but he has shown more interest in vegetables since the program started.”

## **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 2025, EFNEP made significant strides, with 96% of participants making positive changes in their diet, 55,216 youth educational contacts, and 6,961 families enrolled. The program also benefited from the contributions of 1,209 volunteers who completed 16,243 hours of service, valued at \$545,602. 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.

**As a result, 92% of participants improved their food resource management, 79% enhanced their food safety practices, and 74% increased their physical activity.**

“We have cut down on buying foods with high sodium and sugar after taking this class. When my daughter wants a snack, we read the label before we buy it.”





## Dinner Tonight

AgriLife Extension's Dinner Tonight program provides healthy recipes for Texans while building self-efficacy in meal planning, healthy cooking techniques, and food safety. The program features dynamic, user-friendly recipe cards with high-resolution photos and videos, along with diverse, filterable recipe categories. Dinner Tonight emphasizes food safety by offering evidence-based best practices and practical tips for food preparation, cooking, and storage. The program also includes in-person and virtual cooking school demonstrations, supported by web-based continuing education resources.

Designed for mealtime decision-makers, Dinner Tonight aims to increase confidence in planning meals, preparing healthy foods, and applying safe food-handling practices. Its impact extends beyond individual participants to their families, co-workers, and friends. In FY 2025, the program reached 4,618 participants and demonstrated meaningful behavior change. Fifty-nine percent of participants reported increased confidence in meal planning, nearly 60% felt more confident modifying recipes to reduce salt, sugar, and fat, and 98% of surveyed participants indicated that they or their families benefited from the program.







## Chronic Disease Prevention and Management

In FY 2025, AgriLife Extension Family and Community Health educators and volunteers conducted more than 2,200 educational events focused on preventing and managing deadly and costly chronic diseases, resulting in over **124,700** direct contacts. The following programs illustrate the breadth and depth of offerings across the state.

### Diabetes Management

AgriLife Extension's diabetes programming educates Texans on diabetes prevention and management. With an estimated 7.1 million Texans living with prediabetes and 3.1 million diagnosed with diabetes, the annual cost of diabetes care in Texas totals approximately \$34.3 billion. Extension's diabetes programs emphasize effective disease 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 support improved blood glucose management through comprehensive, evidence-based curricula aligned with national standards of care. In FY 2025, an evaluation study of 295 participants who completed a diabetes education series demonstrated significant improvements in confidence and diabetes self-care behaviors. Participants gained the knowledge and skills needed to better manage diabetes and reduce their risk of disease-related complications.

### Cooking Well Programs

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service developed the Cooking Well programs as an educational approach to preventing diet-related chronic diseases across Texas. Through hands-on recipe demonstrations, the four Cooking Well programs build participants' confidence in healthy food preparation skills, addressing topics such as diabetes management, healthy blood pressure, culturally relevant cuisines, and safe meal preparation. In FY 2025, 2,080 individuals participated in Cooking Well programs statewide. The programs effectively met participant needs, with 98.1% (n = 1,471) reporting that they or their families benefited from participation, and 99.2% of respondents (n = 1,648) indicating they would recommend the

program to others. Participants also reported meaningful behavior change. Nearly half (47.8%, n = 756) increased their confidence in preparing meals and snacks at home, while 44.0% (n = 702) reported greater confidence in modifying recipes to reduce salt, sugar, and fat. In addition, post-program outcomes showed increased daily fruit consumption among 41.5% of participants (n = 670) and increased vegetable consumption among 42.9% (n = 687).

### HealthTalk Express

The HealthTalk Express program delivers concise health presentations—30 minutes or less—using a persuasive public speaking approach to inform community members about important health topics and empower them to take action. The program helps Texans understand their health risks and motivates them to make healthy choices that

**“ This is the first time I have understood what diabetes is, how it affects my body, and what I can do to control it.”**





improve quality of life and reduce the likelihood of developing chronic disease. Program modules address a range of topics, including diabetes prevention, stress reduction, and maintaining a healthy life balance. In FY 2025, HealthTalk Express reached 885 adults across 31 Texas counties. Program outcomes demonstrate strong intent to change behavior, with 89% of participants indicating they plan to take future action to prevent chronic disease and 97% reporting they intend to use the information to improve their personal health.

**“** *Very informative and helpful. I enjoyed the discussion and the slides were great.”*

**“** *I thought this session was wonderful. I've dealt with anxiety and depression and I've learned that being outdoors in nature . . . I always feel better. Find it my safe space and my anxiety and depression goes down. Being outdoors is my safe and calming space.”*

### Weight Management and Healthy Lifestyle Programs

AgriLife Extension offers several evidence-based programs designed to help participants manage their weight through the adoption of healthy lifestyle behaviors. Participants receive support from Extension agents as they set goals, monitor progress, and build skills related to physical activity and nutrition for improved health. In FY 2025, 722 individuals actively participated in the Step Up, Scale Down and Maintain No Gain programs. Among participants, 272 reported weight loss during the program, with an average loss of 7.6 pounds. The programs effectively met participant needs. Of those responding to a post-program survey, 95.8% (n = 459) reported that they or their families benefited from participation, and 99.2% (n = 480) indicated they would recommend the program to others. In addition, 153 participants (31%) self-reported improvements in their overall health following program completion.



## Early Childhood Health and Safety

In FY 2025, AgriLife Extension Family and Community Health faculty and staff supported the child care workforce in Texas and beyond by reaching more than 90,000 early childhood educators (ECE) through online and face-to-face trainings focused on the latest research in health and safety, nutrition, and child development. ECEs enrolled in over **404,000** online courses, enabling them to complete state-mandated training requirements and increase their knowledge of best practices in the early childhood field.



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



## Promoting Early Education Quality

Decades of research demonstrate that a well-trained early childhood workforce is essential to providing safe, high-quality care and early learning experiences for young children. Access to quality early childhood services enables parents to remain in the workforce and supports children's cognitive, social, and emotional development, contributing to positive outcomes across the lifespan. Through Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service's Promoting Early Education Quality (PEEQ) programs, ECEs strengthen professional competencies, access career pathways, and meet state-mandated training requirements necessary to sustain and advance the early childhood industry.

AgriLife Extension delivers a comprehensive suite of award-winning PEEQ workforce development programs that provide in-person and online professional development opportunities for ECEs in Texas and nationwide. These programs offer convenient, flexible, and affordable pathways for earning state-required contact hour credits and progressing toward industry-recognized credentials.

PEEQ is a leading professional learning provider, offering a robust library of more than 200 self-paced online courses. Since 2010, ECEs from 251 of Texas' 254 counties and all 50 states have completed more than 4.9 million online courses. Complementing the online platform, the PEEQ Webinar Series provides real-time instruction and professional networking opportunities, particularly benefiting rural early childhood professionals. Locally hosted PEEQ training events further address emerging and community-specific workforce needs. In addition, the Texas state-approved 60-hour PEEQ Director Credential program prepares the next generation of early childhood leaders to effectively manage and sustain child care operations.

**AgriLife Extension's PEEQ workforce development efforts have significantly advanced professional learning for the early childhood workforce in Texas and beyond. In FY 2025, more than 90,000 ECEs nationwide enrolled in 404,335 online courses. Participants completed 78% of enrolled courses and demonstrated statistically significant knowledge gains, with average assessment scores increasing from 72% pre-course to 85% post-course.**

**PEEQ programs also support workforce stability across the early childhood industry. The 12-course Child Care Regulation training series enables Texas educators to meet state-mandated requirements necessary for continued employment. In FY 2025, Texas ECEs completed courses in this series 142,012 times.**

Three workforce-focused training pathways—the 60-hour Director Credential, the 8-hour Starting a Home-Based Child Care Business training, and the 120-hour Preschool Child Development Associate (CDA) training—equip current and prospective professionals with the skills needed to enter and advance within the field. While these programs are relatively new, early indicators demonstrate strong demand. The Texas state-approved 60-hour Director Credential program awarded 32 credentials to Texans preparing to lead child care programs.

**An economic impact analysis conducted by the Department of Agricultural Economics at Texas A&M University indicates that AgriLife Extension's PEEQ workforce trainings directly support 74,500 jobs, representing an annual wage base of \$2.7 million.**





## Community Safety (Accident and Injury Prevention)

In FY 2025, AgriLife Extension Family and Community Health educators and volunteers conducted more than 2,500 educational events focused on improving community safety by preventing injuries and accidental deaths, resulting in over **82,600** direct contacts. 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 (PSKS) program works to reduce deaths and injuries from motor vehicle crashes by increasing the correct use of child safety restraints across Texas. While PSKS serves families statewide, the program prioritizes support for low-income and minority families, who often face barriers to access, including the cost of appropriate child safety seats. Project-trained Child Passenger Safety Technicians deliver education through hands-on demonstrations, teaching parents and caregivers how to properly install and use child safety seats. PSKS also operates Child Safety Seat Fitting Stations at County Extension Offices, fire and EMS departments, and law enforcement agencies—providing families with convenient access to certified technicians who inspect installations, answer questions, and help ensure children are safely restrained. When needed, replacement car seats are provided at no cost during check-up events and fitting station appointments. In FY 2025, PSKS

conducted 636 educational programs, reaching more than 14,400 Texas families. Technicians inspected 2,444 child safety seats and distributed 1,887 new car seats to families in need. In addition, 93 Child Safety Seat Technicians were trained, expanding local capacity to deliver lifesaving education and services across the state.

“***I was rear ended at 50 MPH. My son was in the back seat and he wasn't injured. Thank you for all your patience in answering my questions and giving me advice. You are the reason he was in that seat. I'm literally in tears typing this because I'll never be able to repay you for that.***”

### Watch UR BAC

AgriLife Extension's Watch UR BAC project helps Texans understand the dangers of impaired driving, underage drinking, and drug-impaired driving.

Through hands-on activities and interactive demonstrations, the program engages youth, adults, and professionals to promote safe decision-making and responsible choices. Watch UR BAC partners with schools, community coalitions, and law enforcement agencies to expand access to prevention education and resources across both urban and rural communities. Together, these partnerships support safer behaviors, reduce risk, and contribute to healthier Texas communities. In FY 2025, the Watch UR BAC team conducted more than 545 educational events, reaching over 61,000 participants statewide.

“***This has changed my perspective on life and the way I live it. I never listened to people who told me about things like this, but seeing someone who has to live through it has changed how I view everything.***”





## Mature Driver Program

AgriLife Extension's Mature Driver Program (MDP) equips motorists age 55 and older with the knowledge and tools needed to remain safe on the road for as long as possible and to make

informed decisions about their driving future. In FY 2025, MDP reached more than 9,000 participants through 176 educational presentations and events. Program delivery was supported by key

partnerships with senior centers, churches, health care providers, and law enforcement agencies.

**“ I was amazed at what I didn't know and have made several changes since the program.”**



## Food Safety

In FY 2025, AgriLife Extension's food safety education programs reached over **21,400** Texans through online and face-to-face delivery methods. These programs provide comprehensive training to food service managers and other employees, representing a collective annual wage base of more than \$204 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, both 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 over 8,500 participants in FY 2025, including 6,117 online and 2,390 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 9%.

**“ Our school district has used [AgriLife Extension] for food handlers and food managers for many years. The instructors are great. The information is always up to date and a great refresher for our long time employees. I highly recommend [AgriLife Extension] as a provider of food safety education.”**



“ My stress went from a 10 to 0 because of everything I learned today.”

## Mental Health and Well-Being

In FY 2025, AgriLife Extension Family and Community Health educators and volunteers conducted more than 944 educational events focused on mental health topics, resulting in nearly **33,000** direct 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, evidence-based tools to manage stress, recognize mental health challenges, and build resilience across the lifespan. Programming emphasizes mental health literacy, effective coping and self-care strategies, and awareness of local, state, and national support resources —encouraging timely help-seeking when professional assistance is needed.

Through programs such as Adult and Youth Mental Health First Aid, Stress Less with Mindfulness, Mindful SELF, Building Resilience in All Texans, Master of Memory, and Living a Fearless Life, participants developed skills to better navigate stress, regulate emotions, manage caregiving responsibilities, and adapt to life transitions. Collectively, these programs support crisis prevention, emotional regulation, and improved quality of life for Texans.

FCH educators delivered a broad range of mental health and well-being education designed to prevent mental health challenges, strengthen resilience, and promote overall well-being statewide. In FY 2025, educators conducted 514 educational sessions, reaching 8,158 direct contacts across 46 rural counties. In total, 27,251 clock hours of mental health training were delivered statewide, including 11,318 hours in rural communities, demonstrating Extension’s continued commitment to serving underserved populations.

Participant feedback and evaluation data indicate meaningful program impact. Among 570 participants, 68.1% reported complete gains in knowledge, 62.5% found the training completely helpful, and 50.2% rated their overall experience at the highest level. Nearly half of respondents (49.6%) reported a high likelihood of recommending the program to others, and 69.3% indicated improvements in their mental health or overall well-being. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that AgriLife Extension’s mental health and well-being programs are effectively supporting preventive education, resilience-building, and early intervention across Texas communities.



## Workforce Development Programs

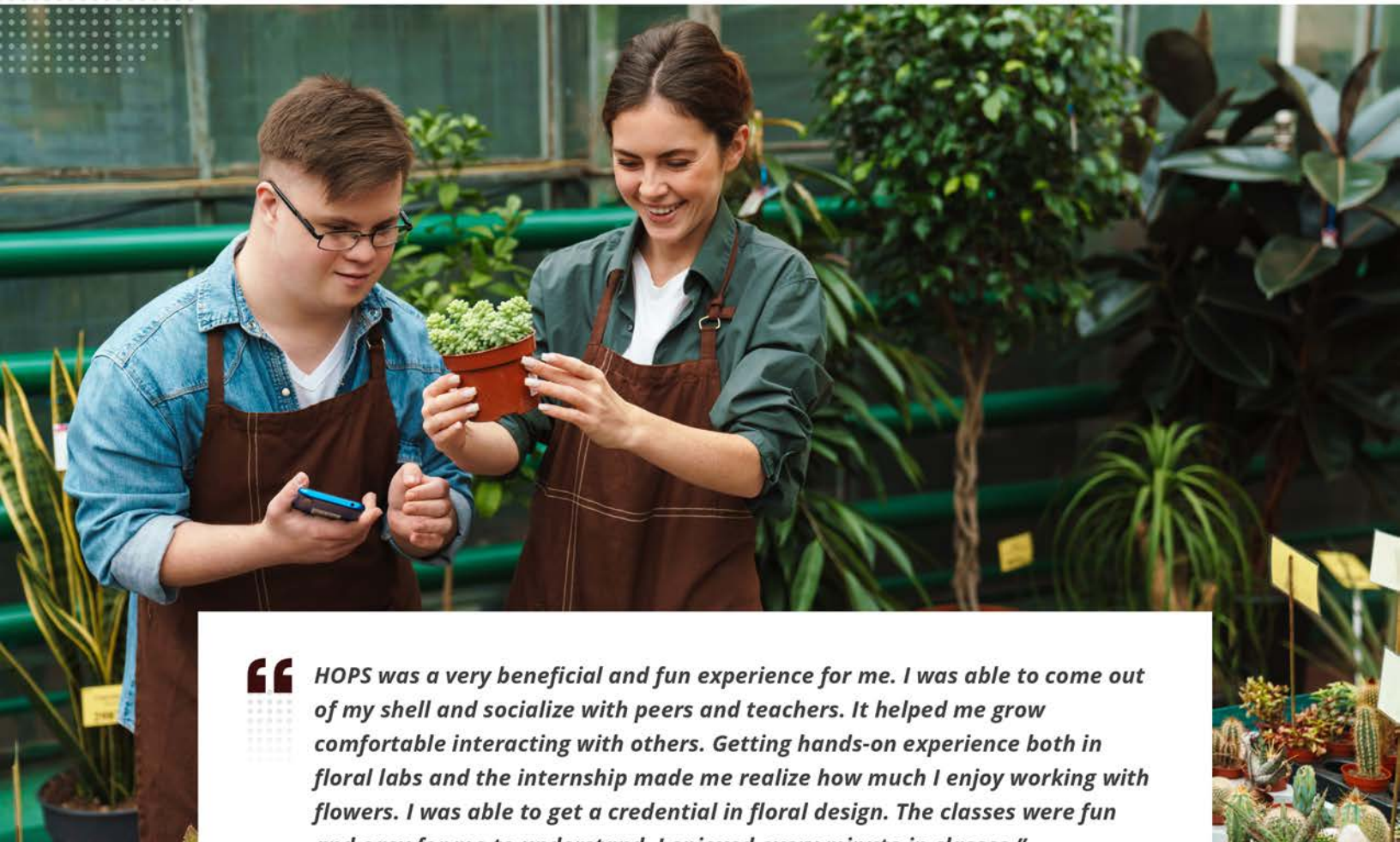
### Horticultural Options in Plant Sciences Program

The Texas A&M Horticultural Options in Plant Sciences (HOPS) Certification program is a 32-week, postsecondary transition program designed to prepare individuals with and without disabilities for careers in the horticulture industry. The program builds participants' technical knowledge, hands-on skills, and workplace readiness to support

successful transition into competitive integrated employment. Launched in 2021, HOPS offers three specialized career tracks: floral design, greenhouse/nursery plant production, and landscape management. In FY 2025, 14 HOPS participants completed a total of 5,200 contact hours of instruction and experiential learning. Program outcomes demonstrate strong effectiveness, with an 89% graduation rate, a 72% post-

graduation competitive employment rate, and 100% of graduates earning an industry-recognized credential—underscoring the program's success in preparing participants for meaningful employment in the horticulture sector.

**“Amazing program that changed my life. There were people helping us through the whole process.”**



**“HOPS was a very beneficial and fun experience for me. I was able to come out of my shell and socialize with peers and teachers. It helped me grow comfortable interacting with others. Getting hands-on experience both in floral labs and the internship made me realize how much I enjoy working with flowers. I was able to get a credential in floral design. The classes were fun and easy for me to understand. I enjoyed every minute in classes.”**



## Work and College Opportunities

Work and College Opportunities (WACO) is a six-week summer residential program designed to prepare young adults with and without disabilities for successful participation in the workforce and postsecondary education. The program builds core competencies in professionalism, self-determination, self-advocacy, teamwork, and other skills essential for employment and college readiness. Participants engage in specially designed classes on the Texas A&M University campus and have the opportunity to audit Blinn College courses aligned with

their career interests. In addition to academic exposure, participants gain hands-on work experience with employers in the Bryan-College Station community, reinforcing classroom learning through real-world application. Program emphasis areas include vocational skill development, career exploration, and independent living skills, all of which support participants' transition toward greater independence and long-term educational and employment success. In FY 2025, 27 participants completed the WACO program, generating 6,480 contact hours of intensive instruction, experiential learning, and workforce preparation.

**“The WACO program is a one-of-a-kind program, a program designed with heart, vision and deep understanding of what young talented people are truly capable of when given the right tools, support and continuous encouragement.”**



**“To the program director, professors, staff and mentors: You have gone above and beyond to empower the students. You created a space where students could bloom as independent, confident young adults. You saw possibilities where others might have seen limitations, and that has made all the difference.”**





# EMERGING PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

**Family and Community Health responds to emerging health issues with innovative approaches that equip Texans with awareness, research-based knowledge, and practical resources. The following programs and initiatives highlight new strategies designed to help Texans thrive in their health and well-being.**

## **National Active Living Partnerships (ALPs) Consortium for Land Grant Universities**

With support from the SEC Faculty Travel Grant Program, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Family and Community Health partnered with Auburn University and the Alabama Cooperative Extension to advance an initiative promoting active living through community design. Joint planning activities and an in-person site visit to Auburn University helped establish a shared vision for a national consortium focused on strengthening Extension's capacity through coordinated collaboration and the development and dissemination of practical tools and resources. This work positions AgriLife Extension as a national convener and leader in advancing active living efforts.

## **Texas Active Policy, Research, and Engagement Network (TAPREN)**

The TAPREN project aims to improve the health of Texans by promoting active living through community design. Supported by a \$420,000 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.

## **Get Outside!**

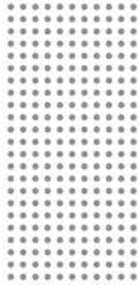
The Get Outside! program encourages families to incorporate daily outdoor and nature experiences into their lives using a bingo card format designed to boost health, happiness, and family time together. The five-week program can be implemented in partnership with a variety of youth-serving settings, including child care centers, home-based child care providers, elementary classrooms, afterschool programs, and libraries. Get Outside! was successfully launched in 2024 in partnership with schools, libraries, and afterschool programs. To date, 84 families from eight counties have participated by registering in Howdy Health and completing daily bingo activities in and around their homes. As a result, families engaged in more than 250 hours of outdoor activity and reported positive health outcomes. The program has been expanded for early childhood audiences and continues to be piloted and evaluated for effectiveness. This emphasis on nature-based programming has contributed to multiple agency-wide early childhood conferences and health summits held over the past year with similar themes.

## **Active / Well Family Initiative**

This family-focused effort leverages internal and external collaborations to develop educational materials for families with young children. The initiative encourages active family engagement in positive health behaviors, such as regular physical activity and healthy meal preparation. Programming and education are developed in partnership with key stakeholders to support families in adopting healthier lifestyles.





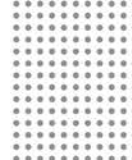


# GRANTS AND CONTRACTS

AgriLife Extension’s Family and Community Health program secured nearly **\$27 million** in grants and contracts in FY 2025 from federal, state, and foundation partners to develop, implement, and evaluate innovative educational programs that improve the health and well-being of Texans.

PROJECT	FUNDER	FY 2025 AMOUNT	PURPOSE
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	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.
Disability Community Coordinators	Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities (TCDD)	\$676,473	Engage individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, along with the caregivers, providers, professionals, and partners who support them.
Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)	United States Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA NIFA)	\$4,520,449	Provide nutrition education for limited-resource families and youth across Texas. This funding supports peer educators in delivering nutrition education to more than 6,000 adults and 50,000 youth each year.

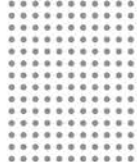




FRESH TRAYS	Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA)	\$388,200	Develop and train local Texas producers and Texas school food service leaders to support the use of local producers in food service contract selection. This approach aims to increase the volume of Fresh TRAYS served in schools, thereby improving the school health environment. The program is supported by a three-year, \$1,164,600 grant.
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)	\$302,450	Provide individuals with disabilities with certification-level coursework and work-based learning opportunities in landscape management, greenhouse nursery, and floral design. The HOPS program is a two-semester program that supports up to 15 students per year.



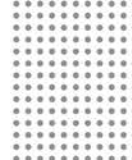




Improving HEI Scores and Food Security Status	Texas A&M AgriLife Institute for Advancing Health Through Agriculture	\$72,000	Evaluate changes in Healthy Eating Index (HEI) scores and food security status among low-income adults in nine counties who participated in the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program during fiscal years 2018–2022.
Mature Driver Program	Texas Department of Transportation (TXDoT)	\$565,479	Provide traffic safety education focused on high-risk road users, including older drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians.
Obesity Prevention in Early Care and Education Settings	Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS)	\$235,000	Lead and expand Texas Healthy Building Blocks and other early childhood education health promotion efforts aligned with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Spectrum of Opportunities for Obesity Prevention in Early Care and Education Settings.
OneOp Lifespan Caregiving	U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Defense (USDA/ DOD), through Auburn University	\$227,698	Create resources for and provide training to professionals who support military family caregivers.
Passenger Safety and KidSafe Initiatives	Texas Department of Transportation (TXDoT)	\$1,249,770	Provide education and resources on occupant protection, child passenger safety, distracted driving, speeding, and overall safety in and around vehicles.



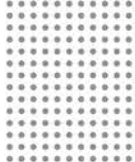




REACHing Well Project	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)	\$675,774	Enhance access to Extension education that promotes healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviors for the prevention of chronic disease. Part of a five-year, \$5 million grant, the project works with churches, schools, and early childhood education settings across Texas.
Success... Powered by You	Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)	\$999,999	Provide 18- to 24-year-olds with education on healthy relationships, financial literacy, and practical parenting skills. Part of a five-year, approximately \$5 million grant, these courses serve as a preventive measure against poor life outcomes for individuals living in a five-county region.
Supporting the Professional Development Needs of the Early Childhood Workforce	Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)	\$5,000,000	Provide access to free and low-cost online professional development training for the Texas early childhood workforce, enabling participants to meet state-mandated training requirements and strengthen their knowledge of early childhood best practices.



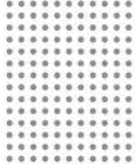




Texas Active Policy, Research, and Engagement Network (TAPREN)	Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)	\$110,000	Support a partnership with the Texas Department of State Health Services to develop a statewide system of assessment, training, and technical assistance that promotes physical activity through community design.
Texas MyPlate Food Ambassadors Changing Environments and Systems	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	\$200,895	Improve nutrition education for students in school and afterschool programs through MyPlate-focused instruction, and provide schools with training on school health wellness policies to positively impact the school health environment. The project is supported by a two-year, \$602,686 grant.
Texas Schools Food Flow: Cultivating Health, Minimizing Waste	National 4-H Foundation	\$161,910	Improve nutrition education for students in seven Texas schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program, including the adoption of strategies to repurpose leftover and excess cafeteria food. The project is supported by a two-year, \$323,821 grant.



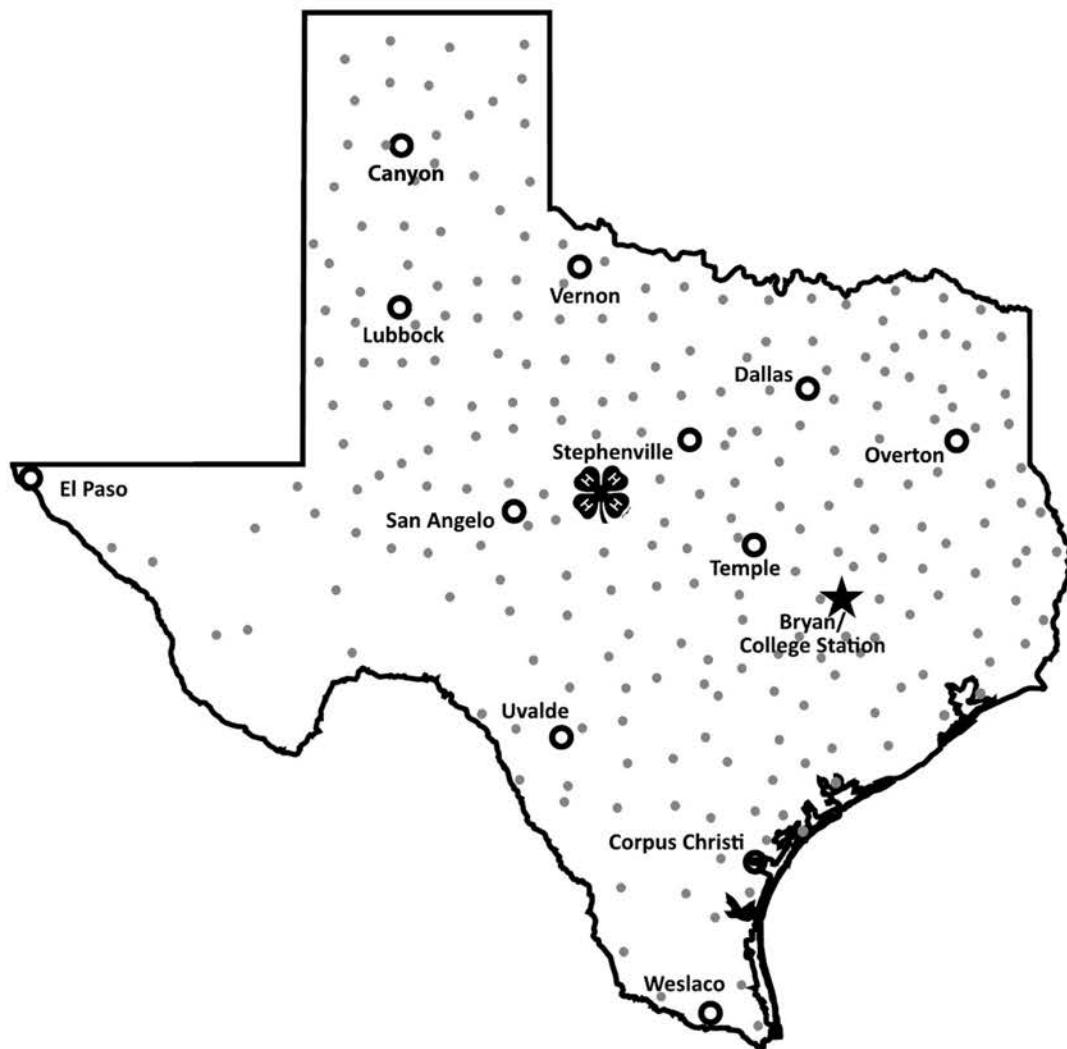




Watch UR BAC	Texas Department of Transportation (TXDoT)	\$1,073,497	Provide alcohol- and drug-impaired traffic safety education for youth in sixth grade through age 25. Education is delivered in a variety of settings using age-appropriate information to promote safe, healthy choices and raise awareness of the consequences of poor decision-making.
Work and College Opportunities Program (WACO)	Texas Workforce Commission Vocational Rehabilitation (TWC-VR)	\$402,960	Provide a six-week summer transitional work and college-based program offered in person and/or virtually.
Workforce Enhancement in Healthy Aging and Independent Living Collaborative	University of North Texas Health Science Center (UNTHSC)	\$50,000	Provide professional development training to support healthy aging and promote dementia-friendly resources and services in rural communities.







- 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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**FAMILY &  
COMMUNITY HEALTH**

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