

My Food and Nutrition Story and Portfolio

What do food and nutrition, public speaking, clothing and textiles, consumer decision making, and companion animals all have in common? Me, that's what!



This is me in the outfit I made for the 50's dance at the 2012 Texas 4-H Congress.

Hi my name is _____ ; I am 18 years old and live in Temple, Texas. I was born into a blended family; my oldest sister is Tabitha, who is 26 and my dad's daughter from his first marriage. She lives in San Antonio, TX with her husband, Charles. Brian, 25, is my mom's son and lives in Oklahoma City, OK with my three year old nephew, Corbin. Then, I also have a younger brother, Brandon, 16. Next, are my mom, Jan, a housewife who home schools Brandon and me, and my dad, Gary, one of the associate managers at Cracker Barrel in Temple. Last, but definitely not least, are our two Pembroke Welsh Corgis. One of them is mine and his name is Tres, and my mom's dog is Benji, he's the "baby" of the family.

Not long after moving to Temple, I met my now good friend, Katelyn Heisch, an active member of 4-His Glory 4-H club. That fall, when one of the home school co-ops had their annual open house, I found out more about 4-H and decided to give it a try. That was three years ago, and I am hooked; I bleed green!

My family and I love eating healthy and tasty meals and snacks. That is how we incorporate the Food and Nutrition into our daily lives. One of the ways we do

this is by baking our own whole wheat bread. Did you know that as soon as wheat is ground, it starts to lose its nutrients? To maintain as many nutrients as possible, we actually grind our own wheat before making the bread. Originally, we used a hand-cranked wheat mill. But that was hard, and took way too long to get enough flour to make our bread; now we have an electric NutriMill that grinds it in a heartbeat!

Additionally, when I bake my cakes and cookies, I use whole wheat flour as often as I can, although if I'm selling the products, I will use white cake flour since that is what most people are used to having in their baked goodies. One of my goals is to be able to sift the flour that I have ground so that the product is still higher in nutrients than if I did not. I also reduce the amount of sugars in them so that the items are not too sweet.

A couple of years ago, I took a cake decorating class where I learned how to decorate cakes using butter cream and royal icing and make them look professionally made. I loved my class so much that I organized a cake workshop for the other 4-H members in our county. This year we are planning on having a second and maybe even third cake decorating workshop to teach how to make and work with fondant.

Using my love of cooking and baking, I have found a variety of ways to give back to the community. I love to bake homemade cookies and other goodies to take to church functions such as youth group, the ALPHA course, and the Halloween Festival, and to 4-H meetings such as Barking Buddies, 4-His Glory, and the Leaders 4 Life 4-H clubs and projects; I even helped my mom make a cake for Linda Fuchs when she retired as a Bell County FCS agent. Also last summer I was honored to be asked to make a baby shower cake for our new FCS agent, Chelsea Stevens. I chose to make a baby carriage cake using a basket weave



This is the cake I made for Chelsea's baby shower. It was the first time I tried the basket weave technique.

technique. Several times a year, I bake cookies or muffins to take to our local first responders to thank them for serving our community. I also coordinate bake sales, and with other teammates, we raise money to purchase



Is the pasta ready yet? Cooking for Ronald McDonald House in Temple.

additional curriculum for our Leaders 4 Life team. So far, we raised over \$200.00 to purchase flash cards for two teams. We also take the extra items not sold and donate them to the Ronald McDonald House and Fire Stations.

I also enjoy preparing meals for the residents of Ronald McDonald House in Temple. My friends and I have made tacos, salads, fruit

bowls, spaghetti and meat sauce and vegetable platters to serve healthy meals to those whose families are in the middle of a medical crisis with one of their children.

As part of the Food & Nutrition Quiz Bowl, my team members and I have learned cooking terms, food safety, and basic nutrition. By studying hard and learning as much as we can, my team and I have been able to compete at State Round Up for the past three years. In 2010, my team was one of the first eliminated. Last year, in 2011, we advanced as far as three rounds. Not bad for my second year in 4-H, if I do say so myself. This year,



The 2011 Nutrition Quiz Bowl team

although our team only has three members, we were more prepared than ever. We were the first Bell County team to finish first in the District 8 Quiz Bowl, and we advanced four rounds at the Texas State Roundup in Lubbock!

Not only do I compete in the quiz bowl but I also participate in Food Challenge with four of my friends. We



The “Underdogs” practicing for Food Challenge

were able to cook different things each practice and competition. Last year, the first year we competed, we chose to do an “Underdog” theme, since we had no clue what we were doing and were considered the underdogs. We were able to finish second in the Bell County competition and third at District 8 competition. This year we were the “Western Stars”, and though we finished third at the District 8 competition again this year, we still all had a blast participating, especially since we did place first in the Bell County event.

At one point last year my brother (who was one of my team mates) and I went to the San Antonio Livestock Exhibition for its Food Challenge competition. When we got to the building where it was being held, we both jumped out of the van so we could quickly get in line to sign in. As we were checking in, supply boxes were mentioned. Supply Boxes, what supply boxes? Oh No! We did not have one supply box, let alone two. Come to find out we missed the part in the rules that said each contestant needed his or her OWN supply box. Needless to say, my brother and I were not able to compete. Disappointment set in. We trudged back to the van. As we are pulling away, my mom decides to go find an HEB Central Market, which we do not have in Temple. FOOD TRIP!!!

Our food trip involved exploring Central Market and trying all kinds of new and different food. One thing we tried was black quinoa salad with mango and cilantro. It was VERY good. In fact, it was so good, my mom bought quinoa for us to try to replicate it at home. We also tried blood oranges and all kinds of different breads, many of which we never knew existed.

This summer I have had several opportunities to utilize my Food Challenge skills while working at a summer camp on Belton Lake. In fact, one of the most memorable was the chili meal. It was getting late and the staff and campers were getting hungry. My boss, knowing my love of cooking, decided it was my day to cook. However, there was not a planned meal or even a recipe. He just gave me the ingredients: buffalo, cactus (nopolitos), summer squash, tomatoes, ranch-style beans, red onion, and Montreal seasoning. I started planning my meal: “I can sauté the onion. Then I can julienne the squash...” That is when Mr. Matthew, my boss, asked, “What’s julienne?” So I had to stop to explain that julienne is when you cut food, usually vegetables, into long, thin strips. Then I went back to my planning. After a few minutes, I had my plan and set about making buffalo chili. Everyone loved it. In fact, even the pickiest eater loved it! And if it were not for the Food Challenge, I would have been stumped as to what and how to prepare everything!

The past two years I have served as co-chair of the Bell County Healthy Lifestyle Advisory Board. The Healthy Lifestyles Advisory Board serves as a committee to help plan food and nutrition/healthy lifestyles workshops, contests, and other activities that relate to the project. As board members, we have planned many activities and helped lead and organize our County Food Show. I also helped organize and give a bread baking workshop where we taught the participants about different types of wheat, as well as the difference between yeast breads and quick breads. Everyone made a loaf of yeast bread and a quick bread in a jar to take home. The extra jars of bread were given to the judges at the Bell County Food Challenge.

Additionally, I planned and led the last two Chef's Day camps. The summer of 2010, we began with everyone playing games to help them learn about the food pyramid, put the food pyramid into practice, and food safety. We also toured Mr. Gatti's Pizza Restaurant and the old Belton HEB. During the tour, the guides showed us how the different departments are set up and how they place the items on the shelves. Did you know that most items in the groceries are set up that the more expensive items are at eye level?



Kyler and I are demonstrating food safety at the Chef's Day Camp.

Last year, instead of tours, we decided to do a Food Challenge workshop. To begin with, we explained what Food Challenge is and how to compete in it. Then we had our team, which went to state, do a mock competition, including the cooking and verbal presentation. After that, all the participants were grouped into teams, given food challenge boxes, and encouraged to make their own dishes. One thing we did differently than the competition is that we grouped various ages together so that the older youth could assist the younger youth to understand the concepts better.

So far this year we have had a Salsa workshop and a Food Preservation workshop. For the Salsa workshop, we started it off with a salsa competition. The participants could, if they chose, bring a salsa – either mild, hot, or fruit (or all three) - to be judged in a blind taste test by two judges who were in a different room. While the judges tasted and deliberated, my fellow Healthy Lifestyles Advisory Board member and I taught the participants how to make a blueberry salsa and a pineapple salsa. We also made sure to incorporate knife and food safety into our presentation since they are so important when handling food and sharp knives. After the tasting and judging we had a surprise for everyone. Salsa dance lessons! To say some were a little surprised would be an understatement! But, all in all, I would say this workshop was one of the more popular!

The most recent workshop that the Healthy Lifestyles Advisory board coordinated and led was the Food Preservation Workshop. We taught about the different methods of preservation such as freezing, canning, and

dehydration. We started with freezing. Just about everyone can freeze food, but did you know that not all foods can be frozen and vegetables and fruits can last a long time if frozen properly? Then we talked about dehydration. Did you know that you do not need a fancy dehydrator to do the work for you; your kitchen oven can do the job just as well? And finally, we moved on to canning, which everyone has heard of, but many have not tried. We explained about the different methods of canning and which works best for which foods. Then, although it technically was a freezing application, we had all the participants make fresh no-cook strawberry jam. We did that due to time constraints and the lack of enough canners to process everything in a timely manner. In appreciation, we gave some of the jars of jam to the Extension Agents and Support Staff. By the way, the jam awesome!

The Healthy Lifestyles Advisory Board was invited to the Boys and Girls Clubs of Killeen to give a presentation on food and kitchen safety. We spoke on how to keep everyone and everything safe in the kitchen. Then we had the participants play food safety “Jeopardy.” They did a great job and we all had a fun time!

Spring 2011 was the first “Let’s Get Physical 5K Walk/Run” which kicked off the *Walk Across Texas* for Bell County. Due to a knee injury, I was not able to participate in the walk, but I was able to host a 4-H Healthy Lifestyles booth where I was able to both promote 4-H and ways to live a healthier life through both exercise and food and nutrition. This year, in addition to being a member of the 5K planning committee, I was able to complete the Walk. Once I returned, I also helped at the Care Improvement Plus table, also know as the “Farmers’ Market,” by passing out bags of fresh fruit and vegetables.

This year, since Brandon and I were not participating in the educational speech competition at Roundup, we decided to do the Healthy Lifestyle Invitational Contest. We had another member of Bell County 4-H



Brandon, Emma, and I after winning 1st place in the Healthy Lifestyles Invitational at State Round Up.

join us. The first time we were able to get together as a team was the day before the competition. We quickly discussed how we wanted to do our presentation and went over the classes (and when I say quickly, I think everything took us less than two hours.) On

Thursday we went into the room very nervous. Thank goodness the competition is similar to consumer with a tad of nutrition quiz bowl thrown in. Several hours later, we were waiting for the results. Bell County team one (that is us)...first place! Then they announced the individual placing: Emma, our other teammate, placed tenth out of 99; Brandon finished first and I, well, I was second! We were shocked and excited at the same time. Needless to say, we were walking on cloud nine the rest of the day.

As part of my Food and Nutrition and my public speaking projects, I have given many presentations on High Fructose Corn Syrup and how it is not good for you, although the Corn Refiners Association spent over \$30,000,000 to try to make you believe it is “fine in moderation.” This year I was one of the presenters at Staying Healthy Together Conference in Belton. I taught the importance of healthy snacks and how to make a healthy fruit parfait. Also, at the 2012 Belton Safety Day, I spoke on the sugar content of various drinks. I did not know that both energy drinks and sodas have 17 teaspoons of sugar in them. Did you?

As I mentioned earlier, I have a public speaking project in addition to my food and nutrition project. Whenever I can, I speak to members of other 4-H clubs, Boys and Girls Clubs, and wherever I am needed on a variety of subjects. For two years, I have been a key presenter on Sun Safety at both the Killeen and the Belton Safety Days. Although most people recommend the highest sun screen available, did you know that once you reach 15 SPF, there really is no need to go any higher? The higher SPF’s really do not protect you any more than the 15 SPF. Many people also forget to use their clothing and hats to help protect them from the sun, just by wearing light colored clothing that covers your skin, you are increasing the protection you have from the sun.

Ever since I joined 4-H, I have been promoting the wonderful virtues of the organization. I have hosted a booth at the Bell County 4-H Open House each year, speaking about the Exchange Club, Barking Buddies Dog Project Club, and the Leaders 4 Life project. I have also gone to the Temple Breakfast Lion’s club and told the members how beneficial 4-H is for the community and how, with their help, we could improve the community by providing more 4-H programs for more individuals in Bell County.



Katherine and I after our 4-H speech for the Temple Breakfast Lions Club.

I have also participated in two separate Youth Leadership programs put on by Big T Toastmasters club in Temple in conjunction with Bell County 4-H. The classes focused on becoming a better speaker by helping us learn how to write better speeches, use eye contact and ways to avoid



Military Science Day ~ Getting ready for the static electricity!

some of the common “nervousness” pitfalls many individuals have: “ums”, “ahs”, pregnant pauses – those moments of silence where you are trying to remember where you are - and the inability to stand still and confident while presenting a speech. We also learned how to give an impromptu speech while avoiding the speech pitfalls. I was awarded the “Best

Use of Research” for my speech on high fructose corn syrup.

Last year I also helped with the Earth Fest in Fort Hood. There, I told kids about how the earth was mostly water, and that there was not a whole lot of land that we actually lived on and also that the land we have to grow our good on is smaller than on what we live. I also was a presenter at the Military 4-H Science Day last summer. My presentation was about static electricity and balloons. The kids seemed to really enjoy the time they spent at the booth. Additionally, I was able to use my speaking skills to help at the Military 4-H Fishing Rodeo. I instructed the participants how to cast and reel their fishing lines in order to become better fishermen.

Not only do I like to learn about food and nutrition and public speaking, I also enjoy sewing. Before this year I had sewn a pillow and an apron from a kit. This year I decided I was going to make a strapless prom dress with a bolero. This dress has boning, lining, netting, and an invisible zipper. I had to redo the zipper at least seven times to get it right. At the Bell County Youth Fair Fashion Review I was able to get 4th place (which means I beat two people who had been sewing for more than 5 years). Then in the District 8 Fashion Show I got 1st place. I qualified to go to State Round Up with my dress, but due to conflicting competitions, I did not compete.

I have also sewn another pillow. It is a pillow my mom and I designed together. It has an illusion braid centered on the front of the pillow and a solid backing. I hope to enter it in next year’s Bell County Youth Fair.

Last year, I also learned how to knit and crochet. I started with knitting, then crochet. I think I like crochet a little better. So far, I’ve crocheted two separate blankets for a friend who became a new mommy in February. Well, she only really got one blanket. The first was lopsided and not very presentable. So I restarted the blanket, completed it in less than four days, and it looks fantastic. In fact, I was able to enter it into the Bell County Youth Fair and received a sixth place. I am quite pleased with my placement as it is really one of my first crocheted projects. I have started another blanket, but have put it on hold for the time being.

This year I have learned how to make kumihimo, which is the historic art of Japanese braiding. I want to use it to make trim for the period dress I am planning for next year’s fair and Fashion show. I also want to create my own jewelry with it as well.

Consumer Decision Making is an important factor in food and nutrition. Even if you are on a tight budget the cheapest thing is not always the best to get. Consumer Decision Making has reinforced how to read the nutrition



This is me in the prom dress I made this year for the Bell County Youth Fair and 4-H Fashion Show.

labels on food items, as well as how to choose the best type of sun screen, laundry detergent, snacks, jeans, and many other items. By using my consumer skills not only do I find snacks and meals that are healthier but also the best bargain for my family. Because I have learned how to objectively look at the items and compare them with what is needed, I have helped my family save money at the grocery and eat healthier. Oh, did I mention that last year I was part of the Consumer team that placed first at the District 8 Consumer Decision Making contest, first at the Navarro County Contest, third at the San Antonio Livestock and Exposition show, and third at State Round Up? I think that is fantastic! Especially since three members of the team, myself included, had never competed or been involved in consumer before last year. This year we placed second at the District 8 Consumer Decision Making contest, first at Navarro County Contest, first at San Antonio and fourth at State Roundup. Additionally, as an individual, I placed first at the Navarro County competition, and sixth at state round up this year.

One of my favorite projects is my Companion Animal project, where I get to include my best four-legged friend, Tres. Together, Tres and I have started learning agility along with my mom and her dog, Benji. Both dogs were doing very well, when a knee injury of mine sidelined us for a while.

Although we are not currently training, we still are learning more about the sport.

As a family, we volunteer for the local agility trials when they are at the Belton Expo Center. Because of this, we have learned more about the terms and ins and outs of agility trials. I have learned how to set bars and shoots, time, and be a gate steward. In fact, I learned how to gate steward one day when there was no one else available even though I was petrified of it. From the first time on, the handlers were very complimentary of my ability to keep things running smoothly and to be heard well enough for them to be prepared to compete. I quickly started to love the position and now my brother, Brandon, and I fight as to who gets to serve as gate steward!



Here is a picture of Tres and me as at the 2011 Texas State Dog Show.

I have also incorporated my food and nutrition into my dog project by being quite mindful of the food the family buys for our little buddies. In dog care and training, I have learned how to help keep my furry friends healthy and what foods are good for them and what ones are not. Most dog foods have grain in them, but grains are not good for dogs to eat. Did you know that many dogs, especially herding breeds, can have serious gastrointestinal problems if they eat wheat or other grains? Many companies add it to extend the foods so that they can have higher profits. Also, high fructose corn syrup is one of the things they sometimes put in the food just because it is cheap. Can you tell me why a dog food needs a sweetener?

Now that I have told you a lot about my projects, let me tell you a little more about me. This past year I rediscovered sports. Well, actually, I found that I love both volleyball and track and field. Let me start with volleyball. I have a lot to learn, but, considering I had never played before, I held my own, being one of the leading servers and a great team leader. I look forward to this fall when the season starts again! This year we will rock the courts!

I also decided to try track and field this year. I planned on competing in the high jump and the 4x100 relay with several of my friends at the Texas State Home School Track Meet in April, however, it was not meant to be. I had a health scare that caused the doctor to tell me I could not run nor exert myself to compete. But, I still was able to compete in the shot put. I had never even seen a shot put before the day of the competition, yet I gave it a hefty toss and tossed it 31.8 feet. It was far enough for me to become the girls' 18 and under (18u) state champion! Who would have thought that a little thing like me could through a shot put? (Oh, by the way, the health scare was just that, a scare. The doctor told us that "I am a tall, skinny teenager, with naturally low blood pressure, who in the Texas heat became dehydrated. I guess I better be more careful to get enough fluids when I'm out practicing!")



Brandon and I selling 4-H clovers at the Temple Tractor Supply Company

Additionally, I enjoy volunteering, both for 4-H events and outside of 4-H. One way I volunteer is to help at Bell County's annual fundraiser, the Hunters' Spectacular. I have helped with set up and take down, led the cake walk table for the kids, and sold T-shirts. Last year I sold about 275 tickets for this at another hunters function. This year I sold about 160 tickets by going door to door, at a pig auction, and at Sam's Club.

This past spring, during the Tractor Supply Clover Sales, my brother, Brandon, and I sold over 250 clovers in five days. We chose to spend the time to sell the clovers for several reasons. To begin with, as Bell County Ambassadors, we believe we should help whenever possible to both promote 4-H and to help raise funds. Also, as a fund raiser, this is one of the easiest around: it just takes a little time and effort for pure profit for both Texas and



This is my mom, my brother, Brandon, and me on one of the warmer days when we were bell ringers for the Salvation Army. As you can see, we are wearing 4-H t-shirts!

Bell County 4-H. Besides, we have a lot of fun competing against each other to see who can sell the most!

In late November through Christmas Eve, last year my mom, my dad, Brandon and I were bell ringers for the Salvation Army. We spent 30 hours standing in all kinds of weather, ringing the bell, juggling, and singing Christmas carols to help raise money for the less fortunate. This was our second year, and we do plan on ringing even more next holiday season.

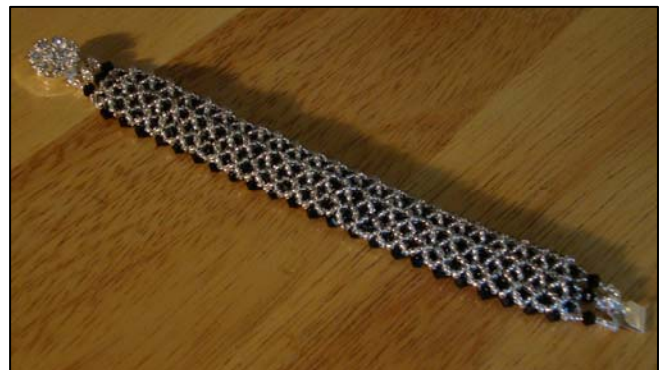


Helping at check out after the Bell County Youth Fair

In addition to entering items in the Bell County Youth Fair, I try to give back to it as well. My family and I helped set up everything the Sunday before it begins and then we help with the clean up and take down when it ends. In between, I help with the judges' orientation and guiding them to their proper areas for judging. I also help when it is time for the participants to pick up their awards and displays. I like to hand out the individual contestants and inquire as to how they did. Finally, I like to help at the auction, doing whatever is necessary to help make it a success

for all involved. This year I was a runner, getting auction results to the proper people for data entry. I had a fun time and got a lot of exercise at the same time!

Lastly, I really enjoy making things with my hands. I love to do bead work and sculpt things from polymer clay. When I am stressed, don't be surprised to see me sitting on the hearth in front of the television either making more jewelry or sculpting something; I find both to be quite relaxing.



This is one of the bracelets I have made. It is called a "weave" and is much easier than it looks!

Upon graduation from high school next year, I aspire to become a pastry chef. To me, that would be the best of all worlds. I would get to make things with my hands while implementing my love of baking.

These past three years in 4-H have been exciting because I have experienced things that I have never done before. If I were not in 4-H I would still be scared to death to talk in front of other people and I doubt I would have ever tried sculpting, bead work, track and field or even the shot put. 4-H has had a very positive effect on me!