



## Extension Education in McMullen County

# Making a Difference

*Improving Lives.  
Improving Texas.*

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service has been dedicated to educating Texans

for nearly a century. In 1915, the agency was established under the federal Smith-Lever Act to deliver university knowledge and agricultural research findings directly to the people. Ever since, AgriLife Extension programs have addressed the emerging issues of the day, serving diverse populations across the state.

Through a well-organized network of professional educators and some 100,000 trained volunteers, Extension delivers practical research-based knowledge to Texans in all 254 counties. Our expertise and educational

outreach pertain to the food and fiber industry, natural resources, family and consumer sciences, nutrition and health, and community economic development. Among those served are the hundreds of thousands of young people who benefit annually from Extension's 4-H and youth development programs.

Texans turn to Extension for solutions. Its agents and specialists respond not only with answers, but also with resources and services that result in significant returns on investment to boost the Texas economy. The agency custom-designs its programs to each region of the state, relying on residents for input and for help with program delivery. Here are just a few highlights of Extension's impacts on this county and its people:

## **McMullen County – Summary of 2013 Educational Contacts**

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- Total Educational Programs Conducted – 112
- Total Participants – 3,666
- Contact Hours – 2462
- 4-H Members – 68
- Curriculum Enrichment Participants- 34

## **Range Management in McMullen County**

### **Relevance**

There are over 83 million acres of pasturelands in Texas. Native rangelands serve as a vital resource in livestock production and for wildlife habitat. Control of noxious weeds and invasive brush species on native rangelands continues to be a challenge for landowners. Brush sculpting allows landowners and wildlife managers to maintain or improve wildlife habitat. Livestock producers should utilize range monitoring and proper stocking rates to improve sustainability and rangeland health. McMullen County has minimal row crop production with over 730,000 acres in rangeland in which beef cattle production and wildlife resources are vital to the area economy. Members of the Agricultural and Natural Resource Committee, Soil and Water Conservation District Directors, and the EQUIP Working group have expressed concerns the issue rangeland health in McMullen County is invasive species such as mesquite, prickly pear, and acacia species.

### **Response**

- Brush Management Consultations
- Range Webinar Programs
- Multi County Hay Field Day
- Result Demonstration - Aerial Treatments for False Broomweed
- Result Demonstrations – MAP 28 Rate Trails /Aerial Foliar Treatments on Mesquite
- Result Demonstration –Aerial Foliar Milestone rate Mesquite Control Treatments (Dull Ranch)

### **Results**

Observations conducted by Extension Agent reflect the adoption of best management practices for re-vegetation of pipeline easements. Landowners and contractors are considering re-vegetation with native grasses versus improved invasive species for improving wildlife habitat. Consultations focused on the importance proper planting techniques and seeding rates and native species grass adapted to region.

# Making a Difference

## Character Education in McMullen County

### Relevance

Historically, character education and ethics were taught in the home environment, but this has changed as demographics have changed. Broken families, parents lacking parenting skills, television, music and social media are few culprits that impact youth behavior. The Texas A&M Extension agency is poised to reach youth and has the opportunity to shape ethical young people who will have values as contributing adults. The shift in society's expectation of young people has changed and youth are more disrespectful as a result and lack manners. This problem is widespread among all youth in Texas. The issue of a lack of discipline and respect was identified during the 2004 Texas Community Futures Forum. The Leadership Advisory Board continues to identify teaching moral and ethical behavior through character education as an important issue to address.

### Response

In McMullen County, the Texas Building Character curriculum adopted by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service and is utilized to target 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students of McMullen County ISD. A weekly lecture and activity series conducted from September through December addresses one of the six virtues of good moral character which includes respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, fairness, caring and citizenship. A pre-test and post-test questionnaire was utilized to measure knowledge gained by students. Statements from the teachers and evaluation questionnaire were utilized to document any behavior changes.

### Results

A pre-test and post-test questionnaire was utilized as an evaluation tool to determine the degree of knowledge gained by the students. The questionnaire utilized a variety of types of questions that include matching, true and false questions and defining or describing the different virtues related to good character.

Pre-test and post-test scores reflected 31 % increase in knowledge levels for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students and 43% increase in knowledge levels was achieved by the 5<sup>th</sup> grade level students.

Post test scores reflected 87% increase in knowledge in identifying the six pillars of character that were addressed through lessons and teaching activities. 73% increase was reflected in the post-test for 5<sup>th</sup> grade students.

Post-test scores reflected a 65 % increase in 3<sup>rd</sup> graders being able to define the “Golden Rule” as it relates to respect. Less than 4% of students could define the “Golden Rule” on the pre-test.

A 26% increase was noted in the ability for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students to describe a trustworthy person compared to 73% increase for 5<sup>th</sup> grade students.

A 64% increase was noted for 5th grade students being able to describe responsible behavior.

Statements taken from teachers reflected a change in attitude from students. Students are more respectful and tolerant with each other.

Students recall many of the lessons and activities when misbehavior or incidents occur. Students will utilize quotes or statements from lessons to make students aware of their misbehavior.

Future program efforts include expanding the Texas Building Character curriculum with the Take A Stand curriculum to assist teachers in addressing the issue of bullying.

**Jr. Master Gardner Program in McMullen County****Relevance**

The JMG program is currently used through community clubs, after school and school based programs. The JMG program has had documented success in schools validated by research studies indicating an increase in science achievement scores, increased parental involvement, improved leadership/community service, and increase knowledge and consumption of fruits and vegetables for children participating in the Junior Master Gardner Program. The purpose of the Junior Master Gardener program is to grow good kids through igniting a passion for learning, success, and service through a unique gardening education.

**Response**

A spring garden was established at McMullen County ISD targeting 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. The school garden serves as an outdoor classroom to teach students about soils, seeds, plant classification, plant identification, weeds, insect identification, plant diseases, nutrition, soil fertility and water conservation. Teaching activities are conducted twice per month from the middle of February through May.

**Results**

A pre-test and post-test questionnaire was utilized as an evaluation instrument to determine the level of knowledge gained from the teaching activities involving soils, soil fertility, and plant science.

Average scores comparing the pre-test to post-test scores reflected a 25 % increase in knowledge gained.

35% increase was noted in student's ability to correctly classify 4 different plants as being either monocot or dicots.

A 10% increase in knowledge was reflected in the plant processes section of the questionnaire.

A 24 % increase in knowledge was posted for questions concerning soil fertility.

All students learned the value of utilizing mulch to help conserve water, prevent soil erosion and manage weeds.

Customer satisfaction survey revealed 100% were mostly or completely satisfied with the activity.

### One Day 4-H

#### Relevance

One Day 4-H is a grass roots community service effort for 4-H youth to identify, plan, and implement a community service project that serves the needs of their particular community and/or county. Modeled after the Texas A&M University's Big Event, one day 4-H teaches 4-H members the importance of giving back to their communities based on issues they see are affecting the lifestyles of the citizens. Throughout this process, youth have the opportunity to develop a partnership with adult volunteers as they plan and implement their service project. One day 4-H helps develop the core life skills of communication, responsible citizenship, contribution to group effort, teamwork, self-motivation, problem solving, service learning, planning/organizing, and social skills.

#### Response

In the spring of 2013, the McMullen 4-H club conducted discussion on identifying needs of the community. Service projects assisting other organizations were identified. The American Cancer Society "Relay for Life" was identified as an organization to assist in fund-raising. McMullen 4-H members with the assistance of parents and volunteers organized a Car Wash and Bake Sale to help raise funds for the American Cancer Society.

A second service project conducted in October. 4-H members volunteered to assist the Double Rafter H Clay Shoot raise funds for graduating high school seniors. 4-H members assisted with assembling gift bags, setup of tables and chairs, and serving as trap operators and score keepers.

#### Results

McMullen 4-H Club was able to raise \$2500 for Relay for Life through its car wash and bake sale efforts. 20 4-H members and 10 volunteers assisted with service project. McMullen 4-H provided volunteers for the Double Rafter H Clay Shoot which took place on two days instead one day as in previous years. McMullen 4-H members provided volunteers to assist with the event which had its largest number of participants since it began. The greatest accomplishment is seeing the gratification on people's faces after a hard day volunteering in serving others. Evaluation surveys indicated youth enjoy working as team and have a better appreciation for the community they live in.

Future plans will continue to utilize the One Day 4-H to dedicate a service project to help improve and give back to our community.







# **Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service**

## **McMullen County**

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