

Perspectives

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Dear Tarrant County Friends and Partners,

2010 has truly gotten off to a beautiful start! January and February set their sights high as approximately 223 adults (just 47 fewer than the adults served throughout 2009) participated in educational offerings of the Urban Development Department. It definitely looks like a promising year as your UD-PAC also begins to work diligently in bringing you a unique educational experience in the form of a symposium – stay tuned for further details in the future. This issue greets you with the second article in the new 2010 Educational Series in Print and is entitled "Your Vision Within Arm's Reach". You'll also find an article that will help you learn more about the Earned Income Credit Benefit (EIC) as you prepare to file your 2009 taxes, some information on the 2010 census, VITA site information, inspirational quotes, and much more!

Please remember to visit us at <http://tarrant.tamu.edu> under the Urban Development section to find regularly updated information, including a community calendar of events and a link to "Access Tarrant's Urban Scene", a blog brought to you by your Urban Development CEA (<http://tiny.cc/urbanscene>).

Let's Keep the Momentum Going!

To join our mailing list, receive more information, make an appointment to meet with your CEA, request an event to be placed in our community calendar, or express interest in our programs, contact:

Sonia Benavides
Admin Asst - Urban Development
817.884.1946

Websites:

- <http://tiny.cc/urbanscene> (UD-BLOG)
- <http://Tarrant.tamu.edu> (COUNTY WEB PAGE)
- <http://buildingconnections.tamu.edu>
- <http://www.tcre.org/>
- <http://www.texasleadership.org>
- <http://communityeconomics.tamu.edu>
- <http://nacdep.net>
- <http://www.tarrantcounty.com/eTCRI/site/default.asp>

Mónica Santiago
CEA - Urban Development

Tel 817.884.1946

Fax 817.884.1941

msantiago@ag.tamu.edu

P.O. Box 1540, Fort Worth, TX 76102

500 Taylor St, Suite 500; FW, TX 76102

<http://tarrant.tamu.edu> (web)
<http://tiny.cc/urbanscene> (blog)



Improving Lives. Improving Texas.
Tarrant County

Your Vision Within Arms' Reach

Habit Number Two!

Many people communicate their frustration of working hard, day after day, without any progress or improvement in their conditions in sight. They wake up, work hard, go home, sleep, and repeat the process again the next day. Every day, steps are taken and repeated. However, the steps don't seem to be the ones needed to achieve what they desire! If this sounds like you, it is time to stop working harder and work smarter!

The second habit you should seek to embrace in your quest toward personal success is the practice of always beginning with the "end in mind". This practice allows you to clearly see your destination. When you are keenly aware of where it is you are striving to go, you can ensure that every step you are taking on a daily basis is leading in that direction. Every step, every move, every decision, and every ounce of energy exerted, should exist within the context of what you value most - that place you want to be - your destination in life!

Your daily existence should agree with what you've defined as important and each day should add to what you envision for your life to be.

Why should you care about how busy you are if all of that hard work is not contributing to getting you to where you want to be? Taking steps in the wrong direction only results in you being farther from your goals!



"I can teach anybody how to get what they want out of life. The problem is that I can't find anybody who can tell me what they want!"

- Mark Twain

It takes a lot of courage to release the familiar and seemingly secure, to embrace the new. But there is no real security in what is no longer meaningful.



There is more security in the adventurous and exciting, for in movement there is life, and in change there is power.

~ Alan Cohen

Tackling the Tough Skills

Achieving Personal Success!

No one says that making a change is easy and no one expects that you make significant strides on your own. Life depends on our ability to seek resources available to us that can aid in our journey toward success. This journey, at times, calls for a more strategic course of action and an intense approach to effecting change.

Are you ready to embark upon a true journey of self-discovery.? If you want to seek to increase your ability to improve your personal attitude, take responsibility, effectively communicate, make healthy decisions, and prepare to embark on a search for your new career, find out more about the Tackling the Tough Skills Program. Receive more information through the Urban Development Department of Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Tarrant County by calling 817 . 884 . 1946 or e-mailing SMBenavides@ag.tamu.edu.

Your Vision Within Arms' Reach

Habit Number Two! Continued...

This second habit assumes that things must be created mentally first and physically second. There is no plan we can develop, create, or implement, before having envisioned a goal to reach first! Mr. Covey explains that "If you've truly defined what you'd like your legacy to be, it will provide you with what you value most. This is what your 'end' should be and every step you take should get you closer to it."

To help you determine your "vision" for your life, do the following:

- List 5 things that make you happy, 5 things you're committed to, 5 things you're currently doing to use your full potential, and your 5 most important roles in life (write 5 adjectives that describe your current behavior in each of those roles).
- Consider the above and then list 5 priority values, 10 personal strengths, and, based on all of the previous steps, 5 things you'd like to do in order to make a difference in the world. Finally, answer this: What would you like those most important in your life to be able to say about you when you are no longer on this Earth?

Each step will help you get closer to defining your vision and your vision will be determined by your values that dictate what you'd like to do to make a difference!

Building Connections : Texas AgriLife Extension Service



"It is a terrible thing to see and have no vision!"

~ Helen Keller

Educational programs of Texas AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.

Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.

John F. Kennedy

I suppose leadership at one time meant muscles; but today it means getting along with people.

Mohandas Gandhi



Building Connections!

Take the Lead! Begin with Yourself!

It is believed that the best leaders lead by example. They are not afraid to work on their own shortcomings while sharing their strengths. They encourage those around them by inspiring, rather than telling, delegating, rather than dictating. Texas is no exception to the growing diversity among its population that mirrors that of the country. The need to be effective while working within an increasingly diverse workplace cannot be denied.

Educational experiences found within the Building Connections program seek to equip you to be more effective in your quest to lead by example. To learn more about the Building Connections : Community Leadership Program provided through the Urban Development Department of Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Tarrant County, call 817.884.1946 or e-mail SMBenavides@ag.tamu.edu.

VISIT: <http://2010.census.gov> TO LEARN MORE!

This year's census is short, sweet, and to the point! With only 10 questions to answer, you can be a part of some wonderful benefits to your community in just ten minutes! Here are some benefits to making sure you're counted!

- **Does your community need money for development?** The federal government allocates more than \$400 billion to states and communities every year based, in part, on census data! Census data can be used for writing grant proposals.
- **Does your community need more services?** Census data is used to determine locations for new retail stores, schools, hospitals, housing developments, and other facilities, such as highways, senior centers, and school lunch programs. Local government uses census data to determine critical social services to implement and funding to provide in your communities.
- **Does your community need effective representation?** Census data dictates boundaries for state and local legislative and congressional districts. This data will determine the number of seats each state will have in the US House of Representatives.
- **Is your community experiencing severe traffic-related congestion and environmental effects?** Census data is used by transportation planners to determine traffic control needs, reduce traffic-related congestion, plan for parking, and develop plans for alternative forms of commuting locally.



Resource: US Census Bureau

10 Questions in 10 Minutes

The 2010 Census

Negative impacts of non-participation are numerous, but some include the following:

- **Ever wonder why certain areas seem to have more locally elected officials than yours?** Problems in redistricting can result when census data isn't accurate.
- **Ever wonder why there are no translators for certain groups in your community?** Improper addressing of language barriers – Undercounting of Limited English Proficient (LEP) community members may limit elected officials' ability to secure funding for bilingual and ESL services.
- **Ever wonder why your school's student/teacher ratio is so much higher than that of a school one mile away?** The undercount of children can result in overcrowding of area schools.

When you receive that questionnaire in the mail this March, just remember: I'll answer 10 questions in 10 minutes and make a difference for a lifetime! Let's all yell –
Count me In!

THE CENSUS MATTERS TO OUR COMMUNITY : A SPECIAL NOTE TO IMMIGRANT POPULATIONS

- **Every year, the federal government distributes more than \$400 billion to state, local and tribal governments based on census data. These funds, among other things, support tangible benefits to immigrants, such as health care, job training and education, which can help ensure a better future.**
- **The 2010 Census is easy, important and safe. By law, the Census Bureau cannot share your answers with anyone, including the Internal Revenue Service, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Central Intelligence Agency or any other government agency.**

We are in the heart of tax time and the clock is ticking for getting those forms completed and submitted. It is time to contribute to your family's economic well-being as well as that of your local community.

Most people eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) do not claim that eligibility on their forms, mostly due to their not being aware that they qualify. The EITC, which can amount to a maximum of \$5657, is a federal tax benefit for working people who earn low or moderate incomes. The CTC can be worth up to \$1000 per qualifying child. Studies have shown that EITC recipients use their refunds primarily to meet immediate needs such as repairing a vehicle, becoming current on rent and utilities, and purchasing necessities for their children, therefore, boosting their local economies while working toward their financial stability.

However, according to IRS reports, tax preparation fees, refund anticipation loans (RAL's) and refund anticipation checks (RAC's) drained approximately \$325 million from EITC benefits in Texas for the 2005 tax year (\$19.5 million in Tarrant County alone). Billions of dollars intended for working families become diverted to tax preparers and lending institutions through the use of these fee based services.

It is important to know that there is an alternative. Throughout Tarrant County, there are functioning VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) sites that provide free tax preparation and e-filing, allowing you to receive your refund in approximately 10 days; the refund can be even faster if you are using direct deposit (which also allows you to keep more of your refund as a result of not having to pay for a check cashing fee). For a VITA location near you, call 211 for information on site locations, days, and times of operation, look ahead in this issue, or visit <http://tiny.cc/urbanscene> (keyword VITA). Some sites also have Spanish language assistance available.

How may I help you?



VITA SITES



Mid-Cities Area VITA Sites

- Bedford/Hurst Senior Center (Fridays by appt)
817-952-2325
- Bedford Public Library (Saturdays by appt)
817-952-2335
- Euless Public Library (Tuesdays & Saturdays by appt)
817-685-1489
- Grand Prairie Memorial Library (Mondays & Wednesdays;
11-3 PM)
- Grapevine Senior Citizen Center (Wednesdays by appt)
817-410-8130
- Hurst Public Library (Tuesdays by appt) 817-788-7300
- Irving Central Library (Saturdays; 10 – 2)
- Urban League of Irving (Saturdays; 10-1)
Spanish language assistance available



For more information on sites found in Aledo, Arlington, Azle, Bedford, Benbrook, Breckenridge, Burleson, Cleburne, Colleyville, Crowley, Decatur, Euless, Fort Worth, Forest Hill, Glen Rose, Granbury, Haltom City, Hurst, Keller, Lake Worth, Mansfield, Milsap, Mineral Wells, North Richland Hills, Richland Hills, Roanoke, Saginaw, Southlake, Springtown, Stephenville, Watauga, Weatherford, and White Settlement visit <http://tiny.cc/urbanscene> (key words VITA, city of interest) or call 211. For more information on VITA sites throughout the state of Texas, call 817-884-1946 and speak with Sonia Benavides or call 211.

Fort Worth VITA Sites

By Appointment Only:

- George Hawks Central Library
817-871-7721
- Casa Senior Center 817-332-7303
- Diamond Hill Library 817-624-7331
- Near Northside Partners Council (Eng/Spa)
817-625-9816
- East Regional Library 817-871-6436
- East Berry Library 817-536-1945
- Handley Meadowbrook Rec Center
817-817-451-0222
- Northside Public Library 817-626-8241
- RD Evans Rec Center 817-731-8789
- Edgecliff Village City Hall 817-293-4313
- SW Regional Library (Eng/Spa)
817-782-9853
- Clinica de Asesoría (Eng/Spa) 817-293-6621
- Summerglenn Branch Library 817-232-0478
- Ryan YMCA 817-346-8855
- First Baptist Church 817-237-3281

No appointment necessary:

- Handley Meadowbrook Rec Center
(Saturday, January 30, 9 – 2)
- First Class American CU (Mon – Fri 8 – 4)
- Community Tax Center – Wesley Center
(Mon & Wed 4 -8)
- Community Tax Center – Catholic Charities
(Tue & Thu 4 – 8)
- Carter Metropolitan Church
(Saturday, February 13, 10-5)
- Opening Doors for Women in Need
(Mon-Wed, 2 – 6; Sat 9 -2; Closed Feb 15)



*How may I
help you?*

Arlington VITA Sites

- Central Library (Tue & Fri 10-2; Sat 9 - 1)
- Lake Branch Library (Tue 10:30 – 2:30)
- NE Arlington Library (Mon & Wed 10:30 – 2:30)
- East Arlington Branch Library (Mon & Wed 10:30 – 2:30)
- Woodland West Branch Library (Thu 1 – 5)
- SE Branch Library (Wed 1 – 5)
- Foundation Community Tax Center
(Eng/Spa; Mon-Thu 10 – 7; Sat 9 – 2)
- SW Branch Library (Wed 1 – 5)
- Family Guide (Mon-Fri, 9 – 6; Sat 9 – 5)
- New York Hugh Smith Center (March 20th ONLY; 9 – 5 PM)



- For additional information on exact addresses, phone numbers, days of operation, and/or times of operation, call 211 or visit the Urban Development blog at <http://tiny.cc/urbanscene> (key words VITA, city of interest)
- For additional information on immigrants' eligibility for tax credits, visit <http://www.cppp.org/files/2/EITCbrief.pdf> (page 4) or contact the National Immigration Law Center at 213-639-3900 or www.nilc.org