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2015–2016 Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Superior Service Awards

The Superior Service Awards recognize Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service faculty and staff members who provide outstanding performance in Extension education or other outstanding service to the organization and to Texans.

County Extension Agents

Ms. Kristen Greer Clark  
CEA–4-H Youth Development, Johnson County  
For more than eight years, first in Anderson County and, since August 2010, in Johnson County, outstanding outcomes have given evidence that Ms. Clark achieves program development and youth engagement at the highest level. Her school enrichment and educational programs for youth provide a rich range of activities focused on leadership, agricultural literacy, and effective 4-H club and project experiences, including tours, camps, clinics, quiz bowls, and more. Horsemanship and livestock projects prevail in the county’s 4-H program, complete with opportunities to become a mentor and ambassador. Thanks to Ms. Clark’s leadership, local 4-H’ers also have a community-supported learning opportunity to visit our nation’s capital. In her dedicated support of Johnson County families, Ms. Clark is commended as a servant leader and passionate educator.

Mr. Zach T. Davis  
CEA–Agriculture and Natural Resources, Hill County  
Mr. Davis built a nine-year record of success in Johnson County, where his programs in rural land management and livestock and forage production made thousands of educational contacts with learners representing well over 200,000 acres. Since 2012, the total estimated economic benefit reported by these program participants has exceeded $2.5 million. During that period, Mr. Davis’ efforts included seven result demonstrations and 72 sessions eligible for continuing-education credit, as well as a leadership role in planning district-wide webinars. He is a valued member of the Texas County Agricultural Agents Association (TCAAA), having served as District 8 Director and Alternate Director for the past three years, in addition to serving numerous committee roles. He received a 2014 TCAAA Achievement Award and was named the Heart O’ Texas Fair Rookie of the Year Committeeman in 2011.

Mr. Dale Dunlap  
CEA–Agriculture and Natural Resources, Wheeler County  
When Mr. Dunlap moved from Collingsworth County to Wheeler County near the end of 2012, he took strategic aim at two areas of high need—strengthening outreach to 4-H eligible youth and to producers of beef cattle, a major source of agricultural income in the county. Since 2013, Mr. Dunlap more than doubled 4-H enrollment and oversaw a nine-fold increase in participation at district 4-H events and contests. He also initiated a shooting sports program that led to construction of a new shooting sports complex and thousands of dollars in program support. To engage producers, Mr. Dunlap signed up 240 subscribers to his Ag Newsletter and started radio programs and news articles that reach an audience of 8,000 weekly. With a revived program committee, he organized a full array of educational events that led participants to report a total economic benefit of more than $5.5 million.
Ms. Cory Hundl  
_CEA–4-H Youth Development, Travis County_

Since 2004, Ms. Hundl has given overall management to the Travis County 4-H program, which encompasses 23 clubs and engages more than 12,000 youth annually. Based in Austin, Ms. Hundl adeptly manages diverse volunteers and partners, including the Star of Texas Fair and Rodeo, Texas Capitol Visitors Center and Preservation Board, Toastmasters International, and multiple school districts, educational institutions, charities, and human service organizations. In 2013 and 2014, she secured national grants to support 4-H STEM programs, resulting in several multi-county events. In total, some 300 youth from Travis, Hays, and Guadalupe Counties participated in the Maps and Apps, Magic of Electricity, and Rockets to the Rescue experiments and learned about careers in the GPS/GIS, electrical power, and aerospace industries.

Mr. David Rodriguez  
_CEA–Horticulture, Bexar County_

After leaving the commercial nursery industry, Mr. Rodriguez joined AgriLife Extension in 2006. Now he teaches those in the Green Industry and a wide range of audiences including Master Gardeners, Master Gardener specialists, classroom teachers and students, and hundreds of thousands of residents through his Lawn and Garden Talk Show and through educational activities that he oversees at the San Antonio Livestock Exposition. In the Coordinated Extension Marketing Assistance Program, he was instrumental in the testing and release of two Texas Superstars, the ‘White Stream’ Lobularia and ‘Little Ruby’ Alternanthera. But Mr. Rodriguez’s crown jewel is the Children’s Garden at the San Antonio Botanical Garden, where he reversed a program in decline. Today, local children participate in a 16-week series of Saturday lessons and tend 63 thriving beds—a feat that has drawn national recognition.

Mr. Marty Vahlenkamp  
_CEA–Agriculture and Natural Resources, Hood County_

For 14 years, Mr. Vahlenkamp has been a champion for AgriLife Extension for the residents of his county. His work is reflected well in his livestock education program, which has led local 4-H’ers to earnings of $159,062 in major livestock shows and $66,850 in related scholarships in just the last four years. Under his tutelage, 13 youth entered livestock skillathons in 2014 and seven qualified for their contest finals. Mr. Vahlenkamp also carries a banner for agricultural producers and landowners, ensuring their access to high-quality educational programs and resources pertaining to beef cattle and forage, water quality and conservation, wildlife, and more. In response to increased urbanization and a growing retiree population, Mr. Vahlenkamp supervised an expansion in Master Gardener projects, including improved demonstration gardens and landscaping for a new county services center and a newly restored courthouse.
Dr. Russ Wallace  
*Associate Professor and Extension Horticulturist*

Thirteen years ago, Dr. Wallace was hired as an Extension Vegetable Specialist to provide leadership to the High Plains vegetable industry. Unfortunately, the number of large-scale commercial growers has decreased, partly due to drought. Not to be dissuaded, Dr. Wallace reached out to the small-acreage growers interested in locally grown production. With their help, he began the Texas High Plains High Tunnel Program, which capitalizes on the use of protective covers to improve yield and quality of high-value specialty crops. The project's collaborations led to national funding for research and small-acreage production. Another of Dr. Wallace's many successful endeavors is his work on the Texas Strawberry Project Team. In the past five years, he has made 146 Extension presentations, generated nearly $500,000 in funds for his programs, and published nine peer-reviewed publications.

Mr. Monte Nesbitt  
*Extension Program Specialist–Horticulture*

Mr. Nesbitt provides statewide leadership in pecan, citrus, deciduous fruits, and other small fruit and nut production. In the last five years, he has helped update most of AgriLife Extension's publications on fruit and nut production; delivered over 250 presentations at Extension programs; presented at 14 out-of-state conferences; conducted over 250 consultation site visits; and is regularly consulted by the news media for his expertise. Mr. Nesbitt co-developed and coordinates the Texas Fruit Conference, which provides research-based information to commercial and recreational fruit and nut growers. He has helped generate roughly $675,000 in external funding in the past four years. Furthermore, Mr. Nesbitt has developed a comprehensive research program to study the potential of olives, which can tolerate dry climates and high salinity, as a reliable crop in Texas.

Mr. Mac Young  
*Extension Program Specialist–Risk Management*

Mr. Young's main responsibility is to conduct the Farm and Risk Management (FARM) Assistance Program in Districts 10, 11, and 12, creating detailed, confidential analyses of producers’ operations. He has created 213 FARM Assistance Reports in over 40 counties in the past five years. With this guidance, 35 percent of clients changed tactics and gained $25,347 per year on average. Mr. Young also promotes the program in many ways. He has presented at over 90 county programs to 4,958 participants. In the past five years, he published in four peer-reviewed journals, presented 15 invited papers, and had his work featured in the popular press. In addition, Mr. Young helps plan and conduct educational activities in areas other than risk management. He has presented on livestock and crop markets, the Farm Bill, and the financial impact of drought, to name just a few topics.
Extension Program Support

Mr. Rudy Alaniz  
*Farm Demonstration Assistant, Nueces County (retired)*

Mr. Alaniz’s work in support of agricultural demonstration/applied research in Districts 11 and 12 has no equal, say his nominators. Throughout his career, he was a great asset to educational efforts in agronomy, weed science, entomology, range and pasture science, and livestock production. His work was of the highest quality and resulted in high adoption rates. He was a self-starter, and project leaders could feel confident that the job would be done even if they were absent. He continually anticipated the supply and equipment needs of a wide array of projects. His work ethic allowed project leaders to more than double their output of projects, enabling them to better serve the needs of farmers. Even though he had many other options, Mr. Alaniz chose to stay with AgriLife Extension and devotedly served the people of Texas for 34 years.

Volunteerism

Ms. Carrie Brazeal  
*CEA–Family and Consumer Sciences, Collin County*

Each year, Ms. Brazeal trains Master Wellness Volunteers (MWV) to conduct educational programs such as Dinner Tonight! Cooking Schools. She leads 40 hours of training and interns pay back 40 hours of service. The original MWV statewide curriculum, created in 2007 by Ms. Brazeal and others, involved five face-to-face meetings. After several volunteers couldn’t schedule all the meetings, Ms. Brazeal modified the curriculum to include two study-at-home sessions. Participation has doubled; Collin County has one of the most active MWV groups in the state. Energetic, enthusiastic, and empowering, Ms. Brazeal has a talent for directing volunteers to discover their own communities’ needs and a vision for planning successful programs. Through this approach, volunteers have helped develop numerous new partnerships and more than repaid their training.

Diversity

Roscoe Collegiate 4-H Program Team

Ms. Labeth Carter, CEA–Family and Consumer Sciences and 4-H Youth Development, Nolan County  
Dr. Darrell Dromgoole, Associate Professor and Extension Specialist  
Ms. Roxanna Reyna, Extension Program Specialist–4-H  
Mr. Zach Wilcox, CEA–Agriculture and Natural Resources, Nolan County

Additional team member

Dr. Kim Alexander, Superintendent, Roscoe Collegiate Independent School District

Population growth, changing demographics, poverty, and a globally competitive workforce all carry the risk of a diminished quality of life in Texas. Since 2012, the Roscoe Collegiate ISD and AgriLife Extension have helped minority and underserved youth prepare for, attend, and graduate from community colleges and universities. The Roscoe Collegiate 4-H Program stimulates student interest and engagement in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics through a combination of two 4-H curricula. In 2014, 89 percent of the program’s students graduated with both a high school diploma and an associate’s degree. All students are engaged in activities that interconnect learning with career exploration and development. The program can be a model for other small and rural schools working to prepare every student for success in school, the workforce, and life.
Agricultural Economics Farm Bill Education Unit

Composed of Extension Economists and Program Specialists Steve Amosson, David Anderson, Blake Bennett, Stan Bevers, Rob Hogan, Jason Johnson, Dede Jones, Steven Klose, Dean McCorkle, Joe Outlaw, Natalie Outlaw, Levi Russell, Luis Ribera, Jackie Smith, Bill Thompson, Mark Waller, Mark Welch, and Mac Young

To enable Extension clientele to make the best decisions possible for in accordance with the 2014 Farm Bill, this Agricultural Economics Unit planned and conducted extensive meetings with over 10,000 Texas farmers and landowners. Unit members collaborated with CEAs, FSA personnel, commodity organizations, and other industry participants to conduct educational programs across the state. The process was intense and involved long hours of development and planning. Clients have said that the effort will affect their lives for years to come, and this educational effort is estimated to have resulted in an economic impact of over $200 million in Districts 1 and 2 alone. The Agricultural Economics Unit rose to the challenge and provided outstanding education and value to Texas producers and landowners.

Teams

Big Time in D–9

Dr. Kevin Chilek, Assistant Professor and Extension 4-H Youth Development Specialist
Ms. Caroline Cruz, CEA–4-H Youth Development, Montgomery County
Dr. Dale Fritz, District Extension Administrator
Ms. Starla Garlick, CEA–4-H Youth Development, Jefferson County
Ms. Courtney Latour, CEA–Family and Consumer Sciences, Brazoria County
Mr. Reggie Lepley, CEA–Agriculture and Natural Resources, Walker County
Ms. Michelle Mihalek, CEA–4-H Youth Development, Montgomery County
Ms. Earlene Taylor, Lead Office Assistant, District Office
Ms. Kristy Titzman, CEA–4-H Youth Development, Walker County

Southeast District 9 has come up with a creative solution that helps fit 4-H into the lives of busy families and Extension agents. Since 2011, 13 small 4-H events spanning six weekends have been replaced with an overarching two-day conference and competition, “Big Time in D-9.” The annual conference creates an experience far beyond that of any individual event. As a result, the number of participating youth has doubled. Youth can explore new 4-H opportunities and family-fun activities and workshops. Winners receive awards in front of an audience of more than 300, and they receive better awards. There is also greater involvement and engagement from CEAs. Youth participating in Big Time in D-9 must evaluate their improvement on 16 essential skills, ranging from setting goals to public speaking. For all of these skills, at least 50 percent of youth reported an increase in their abilities.
Sugarcane Aphid Team
Mr. Stephen Biles, Extension Agent (EA)–Integrated Pest Management; Calhoun, Victoria, and Refugio Counties
Dr. Robert Bowling, Assistant Professor and Extension Entomologist
Dr. Edsel “Ed” Bynum Jr., Associate Professor and Extension Entomologist
Mr. Bradley “Brad” Cowan, CEA–Agriculture and Natural Resources, Hidalgo County
Mr. Tommy Doederlein, EA–Integrated Pest Management; Dawson and Lynn Counties
Dr. Allen Knutson, Professor and Extension Entomologist
Mr. Jason Ott, CEA–Agriculture and Natural Resources, Nueces County
Dr. Enrique Perez, CEA–Agriculture and Natural Resources, Cameron County
Dr. Patrick “Pat” Porter, Professor and Extension Entomologist
Mr. Blayne Reed, EA–Integrated Pest Management; Crosby and Floyd Counties
Mr. Rod Santa Ana, News Editor and Communications Specialist
Mr. Kerry Siders, EA–Integrated Pest Management; Hockley, Cochran, and Lamb Counties
Ms. Danielle Sekula-Ortiz, EA–Integrated Pest Management, Weslaco
Dr. Raul Villanueva, Assistant Professor and Extension Entomologist

From Texas A&M AgriLife Research
Dr. Mike Brewer, Associate Professor of Field Crop Entomology
Dr. Gary Odvody, Associate Professor of Plant Pathology
Dr. Gary Peterson, Professor of Soil and Crop Sciences
Dr. M.O. “Mo” Way, Professor of Entomology

In summer 2013, a new aphid was being found on grain sorghum in the Upper Gulf Coast. Soon, Texas and the surrounding states were facing one of the worst pest outbreaks to ever threaten the sorghum industry. Yield losses of over 50 percent were reported. By the fall of 2013, AgriLife Research and Extension had organized an immense research and educational effort. When grain sorghum was harvested in 2014 in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, it became clear that the effort had paid off. Almost all Texas growers took the recommended actions; a few farmers did not take appropriate actions and lost their crops to heavy infestation. Texas Grain Sorghum Producers reported that the task force prevented $160 million in 2014 crop losses, an amount that reached an estimated $265 million through the next season. This work is expected to continue and to provide further benefits to Texas agriculture.

Texas A&M Beef Cattle Short Course
Dr. Jason Banta, Associate Professor and Extension Beef Cattle Specialist
Dr. Bruce Carpenter, Professor and Extension Livestock Specialist
Dr. Jason Cleere, Associate Professor and Extension Beef Cattle Specialist
Dr. Ronald J. Gill, Professor and Extension Livestock Specialist; Associate Department Head for Extension
Dr. Davey Griffin, Associate Professor and Extension Meats Specialist
Dr. Tom Hairgrove, Program Coordinator for Livestock and Food Animal Systems
Dr. Dan Hale, Professor and Extension Meats Specialist
Dr. Rick Machen, Professor and Extension Livestock Specialist
Dr. Ted McCollum, Professor and Extension Beef Cattle Specialist
Dr. Joe Paschal, Professor and Extension Livestock Specialist

The Texas A&M Beef Cattle Short Course is nationally recognized as the largest and most comprehensive Extension beef cattle program in the United States. Dr. Cleere, conference coordinator, and nine other beef cattle and meat specialists dedicate hundreds of hours to meeting with farm and ranch associations, beef commodity groups, breed associations, government agencies, Extension agents, educators, researchers, and producers to determine educational needs of the Texas beef cattle industry. The team then plans and executes the four-day Short Course, engaging the most knowledgeable and dynamic local, national, and international resources. In 2015, more than 1,700 beef cattle producers ranging from novices to seasoned stockmen returned to their operations armed with innovative knowledge and skills as a result of attending the Beef Cattle Short Course.
Texas Strawberry Project

Data has shown that small-acre strawberry production could be profitable in Texas. In collaboration through AgriLife Extension, Prairie View A&M University, and Texas A&M AgriLife Research, some 50 growers, faculty, agents, and industry members participated in the Texas Strawberry Project (TSP) to increase strawberry production statewide. TSP has received $250,658 from the National Strawberry Sustainability Initiative, helping 29 farmers jumpstart their production. TSP has done numerous trials, workshops, and field days, and has taught producers about relevant production practices such as the use of high/low tunnels, plasticulture, drip irrigation, and organic production. TSP also disseminated project results and published the Production Guide for Texas-Grown Strawberries. Since 2012, Texas strawberry acreage has grown 10–15 percent.

Texas Well Owner Network

More than a million private water wells provide water to Texans in rural areas and, increasingly, to those living on small plots in the rural-urban interface. While public drinking water supplies are generally of good quality, private well owners are independently responsible for monitoring the quality of their wells and are frequently at greater risk for exposure to compromised water quality. Surveys of rural audiences have shown that the water resource topics most in demand were regarding private well protection and septic system management. The Texas Well Owner Network was developed to respond to these identified needs, and it has been supported by the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board. Surveys of program participants showed that 99 percent were satisfied with the training. Participants increased their knowledge and improved their water quality.
The Watch UR BAC Project
*From the Family Development and Resource Management Unit*
*Ms. Bobbi Brooks, Program Manager*
*Ms. Bev Kellner, Safety Specialist*
*Mr. Tanner Kilpatrick, Program Coordinator*
*Ms. Laura Dean-Mooney, Program Coordinator*
*Ms. Janet Sandera, Program Coordinator*

**Additional team members**
*Mr. Sean Carter, WhenSeanSpeaks, Inc.*
*Ms. Jenny Carter, WhenSeanSpeaks, Inc.*

The Watch UR BAC Project was established through a 2012 Texas Department of Transportation grant to reach audiences statewide, especially at-risk youth, with education on the dangers of impaired driving. Personal testimony and simulators are used to demonstrate the effect of alcohol or other drugs on driving skills. The simulators serve as an effective tool to get the attention of a technology-focused population. The project has received national attention and team members have presented at prestigious conferences on alcohol and drug awareness education, including the Institute of Police Technology and Management Symposium on Alcohol and Drug Enforcement. Watch UR BAC has been recognized as a Highway Safety Best Practice Project by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Governor’s Highway Traffic Safety Office.

**Agency Leadership**

**Dr. Angela Burkham**
*Regional Program Leader–Family and Consumer Sciences and Youth, North Region*

Dr. Burkham has had a far-ranging impact on program direction, engagement, and interpretation in and beyond the 42 counties in the North Region. She has helped secure funding, provide team training, and implement programs such as the statewide Cooking with Friends and P4. She has helped to create evaluation tools for 4-H, develop outcome summaries, promote the use of social media in education, provide volunteer opportunities, and promote professional development for agents. She has also been instrumental in building partnerships with industry groups, educational institutions, elected officials, and government agencies that enhance Extension’s resources and outreach. For example, as an adjunct faculty member at Texas Tech University, Dr. Burkham has strengthened relationships with other faculty and helped create two new master’s programs for Extension employees.

**Office Support Staff**

**Ms. Misty Cathey**
*Lead Office Assistant–4-H Youth Development Program*

Ms. Cathey joined the State 4-H Office staff in 1999 as a temporary worker. More than 15 years later, she continues to demonstrate the outstanding organizational, technological, and customer service skills that made her a keeper. Ms. Cathey’s keen sense of logistics and office operations allows her to discover technologies that simplify processes not just for the state office, but also for district and county offices and clientele. Thanks to Ms. Cathey, the State 4-H Office has moved from countless filing cabinets to online tracking and file systems for programming efforts. She has designed most of these systems and lends technical support to all of them. Ms. Cathey is a behind-the-scenes person who makes things happen. Her knack for thinking forward and eliminating barriers for others has truly earned her colleagues’ and clientele’s respect and gratitude.
Ms. Victoria Dunlap  
*Office Manager, San Patricio County*

Since 1995, Ms. Dunlap has been highly dedicated to keeping the San Patricio County office running smoothly and efficiently, through work ranging from managing budgets, records, and contact lists to producing newsletters, presentation materials, and reports. Her expertise and experience of 20 years are essential to her coworkers in all matters, especially for FCS and 4-H programs and activities, such as the Better Living for Texans program and the 4-H Special Livestock Show. The clients who visit or call the office on a daily basis commend Ms. Dunlap for an unfailing positive attitude. County department heads and other office managers have great respect for Ms. Dunlap and frequently call on her to assist them with projects. She often serves as liaison between elected officials and the Extension staff on county, district, and state levels.

Ms. Kerri Michalewicz  
*District Office Manager, District 7*

Supporting the district Extension administrator and relations with county commissioners courts are fundamental to Ms. Michalewicz’s job, but there is much more to her role. She supervises five support staff, maintains multiple websites, serves on the district awards and recognition committee, and contributes to coordination of the AgriLife Research and Extension Center at San Angelo. She earns rave reviews for it all, but her nomination especially commends her for reaching out to new county Extension agents and support staff across the district. She assists not only through onboarding, but also with one-on-one conferences and training about the operations of a county Extension office. Among other district office managers, Ms. Michalewicz is known for creative thinking and initiatives that make organizational processes and forms better for all who use them.

Ms. Janna Smith  
*Office Manager, Dickens County*

For 26 years, Ms. Smith has been the backbone of Extension’s Dickens County Office. As an experienced and highly effective office manager and 4-H volunteer, she ensures smooth sailing for Extension agents, committee members, project leaders, and 4-H families. She has been instrumental in the progress of many agriculture programs, including the annual Western Rolling Plains Chemical Conference, as well as the vast growth of the Dickens County 4-H Program. Ms. Smith played a key role in creating the annual 4-H Horse Club Play Days, which evolved to a major series of events that she continues to support. She also supports and serves on multiple local Extension committees, including the Leadership Advisory Board. She received the 1992 County 4-H Silver Spur award; the 1999 state 4-H Salute to Excellence award; and the 2001 Friend of the Dickens County Junior Livestock Show award.
Distinguished Career

**Dr. Charla Bading**  
*CEA–Family and Consumer Sciences, Guadalupe County*

Since becoming an Extension educator in 1986, Dr. Bading has focused on outreach to youth and families while fulfilling roles as county Extension agent, 4-H program specialist, and regional program director. Her positions took her from Guadalupe County to Districts 10 and 7, and back again to Guadalupe County. Along the way, she completed a two-year nonprofit management certification from the Texas A&M Bush School of Government and Public Service, in addition to her graduate degrees. With her diverse experience and expertise, Dr. Bading has maximized the impacts of any program she conducts, including childcare provider training, Dinner Tonight!, diabetes education, Walk Across Texas, and Better Living for Texans. Organizing three international trips is just one of the special efforts she made to broaden horizons for youth.

**Ms. Sandra Kunkel**  
*CEA–Family and Consumer Sciences, Medina County*

Ms. Kunkel began her Extension career in 1978, serving first in Kleberg, Wilson, and Karnes Counties. In 1992, she accepted her present position and also became a Better Living for Texans coordinator and supervisor. In Medina County, 22.7 percent of residents live in poverty, compared to the state average of 15.4 percent. From childcare and parenting education to employee wellness and farm safety programs, Ms. Kunkel directs her efforts to improving the quality of life for those most in need. Her community coalitions and task forces have addressed issues ranging from child abuse prevention to health, literacy, food safety, nutrition, and academic success. She was instrumental in creating Sisters, Inc. in 2010 and works with the group’s 56 members to conduct educational outreach and community service, including a successful annual Medina County Women’s Conference.

**Dr. Judith L. Warren**  
*Professor and Special Initiatives Coordinator*

Nearly 35 years ago, Dr. Warren began her Extension career as a Gerontology Specialist. She progressed to her current position in 2008, after serving as Program Leader for Family Development and Resource Management and Associate Director for Human Sciences. In each role, Dr. Warren sought and found creative, multidisciplinary solutions to benefit families and communities. Among her initiatives, the Minority Peer Educator Project, a health education program, was widely adopted across the country and earned the USDA Impact 2000 Award. She served as principal investigator for another grant project that led to a major team effort and program called Texas Grow! Eat! Go!, which earned the 2015 National Extension Diversity Award. Beyond an impressive array of educational resources and presentations, Dr. Warren’s influence will continue through her commitment to developing truly replicable, evidence-based programs.
2016 Partnership Awards

Established in 1999, the Extension Partnership Awards recognize vital alliances with agencies, organizations, and others beyond The Texas A&M University System. We honor those partners whose dedicated collaboration and support have significantly enhanced the outreach and impact of AgriLife Extension programs for the people of Texas.

Extraco Events Center

AgriLife Extension has long relied on the staff and facilities of the Extraco Events Center in Waco. Home of the Heart O’ Texas Fair and Rodeo, the Center has given more than $665,000 to Texas youth for livestock and college scholarships. It is the go-to place for meetings of agriculture science teachers, county Extension agents, and major show officials, who also benefited from a major Youth Livestock Project Conference that the Center staff coordinated and hosted in 2014. Each year, the staff bends over backwards to house the long-running Blackland Income Growth Conference and Trade Show. Then there are the fair tours and ongoing involvement with programs such as Ag Safety Day and Kids, Kows and More. The Center staff is renowned for its professionalism and helpfulness. Simply put, the Extraco Events Center is at the heart of many Extension programs and is an indispensable partner.

Texas Beef Council

In a partnership dating to 1986, AgriLife Extension first recognized the Texas Beef Council (TBC) in 2000—for support of innovative programming, such as Beef 706 and Beef 101, to provide producer and workforce training throughout the beef production chain. Since then, our joint efforts have grown to include more than 25 distinct programs and activities, such as Beef Quality Assurance training for Texas farmers, ranchers, and veterinarians; Beef Boot Camps for retail meat market managers and meat cutters; and outreach to dieticians, nurses, chefs, food writers, and international trade teams. TBC also hosts the Beef Boot Camp for FCS agents and greatly contributes to the Dinner Tonight! program. In addition, TBC provides Extension with special project funding of over $50,000 annually. Recently, the Council awarded $100,000 for research on remote delivery of antibiotics via darting.

Texas Sorghum Producers

With its mission to support sorghum production, promotion, and marketing, this important commodity group has a long history of working with AgriLife Extension. Just since 2010, Texas Sorghum Producers (TSP) has funded more than 30 applied research projects, including $127,000 for seven projects dealing with the emergent sugarcane aphid. TSP played a critical role in obtaining regulatory approval of an emergency insecticide and collaborated in Extension’s outreach, thereby helping to avert an estimated $265 million in aphid damages in the past two years. Demonstrating further commitment, TSP sponsors and promotes many educational events, as well as professional development for Extension agents, and presents an annual state-level Outstanding Agent Award. TSP also urges its members to serve on Extension planning committees—a win-win for the relevancy of both organizations.
2016 Extension in the City Award

Urban programs are a key component in the impact that Extension education makes on the well-being and prosperity of Texas residents. This award honors elected leaders whose support of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service has significantly contributed to the success of our growing, vibrant outreach to urban audiences.

Dr. John Zerwas
Texas State Representative–District 28

For five legislative terms, Representative Zerwas has been an effective advocate for his district and Fort Bend County. His expertise in health and higher education has made him a key leader in the Texas Legislature, where he sits on the House Public Health Committee and chairs the House Higher Education Committee. Chairman Zerwas champions increased access to higher education and has been a great supporter of the Texas A&M University System. As a physician for more than 30 years, he brings critical insights to the health and human services arena and was a strong voice for the A&M System’s Healthy South Texas Initiative. Representative Zerwas always takes time to meet with Extension Agents and to confer about their programming. He has been a staunch supporter of Extension education and the Extension mission to take the benefits of applied research to Texas residents.