



MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN WHARTON COUNTY

SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER 2020

OFFICE OF WHARTON COUNTY

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AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

The Western Rice Belt Conference Planning Committee coordinated the donation of 11,000 lbs (5/1/2 tons) of packaged rice to the Central Texas Food Bank, on behalf of the rice farmers in the lower Colorado river basin. This is an amount of rice for 110,000, servings of rice. Funding for this generous donation of rice to the Central Texas Food Bank has been provided by the Western Rice Belt Production Conference Committee, from sponsorships generated through the entire rice industry that supports rice growers in the lower Colorado river basin with inputs from seed, fertilizer, irrigation water, insurance, internet, fuel, machinery, grain drying, grain handling, grain marketing, and more. The Western Rice Belt Conference Committee is a program area committee of the Wharton, Matagorda, and Colorado County offices of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. This donation could not be possible without the collaboration of the Texas Rice Council, U.S. Rice Producers Association, Riviana Foods, the Central Texas Food Bank, and the Rice Marketing Association. Covid-19 has certainly drawn more attention from consumers to food security, and the enormous infrastructure and workforce responsible for creating a safe and reliable food supply. This one shipment of rice is enough to provide one serving to 1/9th of the population of the City of Austin, and is produced just less than 150 miles (less than a 2 hour drive) south of Austin, Texas.

FAMILY & COMMUNITY HEALTH



With changes in programming due to the pandemic, Agent Lori Schindler was able to attend multiple virtual trainings including Fall Faculty Conference, BLT Statewide Training, Combined Arms App training, and Covid-19 Testing using the Abbott BinaxNow Ag Card training. She assisted in implementing and delivering a virtual Master's of Memory Program to 100 Senior Citizens across multiple counties. She also assisted the Department of State Health Services by providing 188 hours of Contact Tracing Time. Agent Schindler assisted in implementing and delivering the December 2 Remember Interactive Holiday Calendar on Facebook. She also assisted in implementing and delivering the Healthy Heroes program for approximately 10 3rd - 5th grade members of the Wharton Boys and Girls Club. Agent Schindler assisted 4-H Agent Laura Reyna with the Wharton County Food Show and Food Challenge, and will also serving as a judge for D11 Food show. Agent Schindler went into Wharton and El Campo School districts and certified 200 culinary arts students in Food Handler's safety plus. She held a Food Handler's safety class for an establishment in El Campo and certified 3 of their employees in Food Handler's Safety. A Food Protection Manager's two-day class was held in Jackson County back in September in which we certified 3 participants as Food Protection Manager's.



The Wharton County Library carried out follow-along virtual programming and Come-and-Take Craft programs provided by Prairie View A&M University Cooperative Extension Program through Agent Kashara Bell, Wharton County Library Systems, and Walmart Health 4 Health Grant. Patrons were able to pick up craft packets and nutrition supplies to complete the projects at home. A total of 754 patrons watched our virtual programs and projects were physically handed out to eager patrons. The virtual programming was free and accessible through YouTube, mass email, and Facebook! We received many impact statements and positive messages for our efforts for continuing this annual summer program! The PVAMU Cooperative Extension Program partnered with the Communities in Schools of Brazoria County to host a series of "Scare the



Germs Away" Events. Participants from Sivells and Wharton elementary schools, Wharton Junior High School, and Wharton High School learned about the importance of good hygiene and staying healthy through Agent Kashara Bell. This event reached more than 1,300 students in the county and hopes to make the program an annual event. Students received a goodie bag with educational materials about local resources, items from PVAMU CEP, healthy recipes, Red Ribbon Week drug information, donated hygiene materials, and school supplies. This was a great alternative to replace the void of not having a fall festival due to COVID-19.

4-H & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

September kicked off the start of the new 4-H year and our 4-H members and families were ready to hit the ground running. Our first big event of the year was the County Food Show and Food Challenge. Thankfully, we were able to host a safe two-day event where we had 34 4-H members participate in the Food Show and 16 teams participate in the Food Challenge contest, with a total of 71 youth participating in the event. Our 4-H members were thrilled to have the opportunity to compete in our contest as was evident in having more participation than in previous years. We hosted a virtual awards ceremony the following day and members were able to see not only their results but pictures and videos of our event. We were also blessed to have many parent volunteers step up to assist us with judging and facilitation over the two days. Hosting this successful event has proven to be one of the major highlights of this fall.

