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MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN WHARTON COUNTY

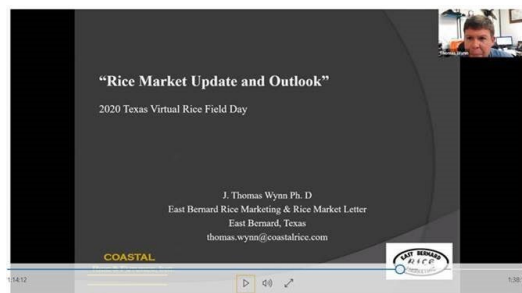
JUNE - AUGUST 2020

AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES



July 9, 2020 marked the first VIRTUAL Rice Field Day. Each year Texas A&M Agrilife Extension hosts the Eagle Lake Rice Field Day and the Beaumont Rice Field Day. Due to Covid-19, a traditional field day was not possible. The Texas A&M Agrilife State Rice Initiative Team cooperated with Dr. Ted Wilson, Director of the Beaumont Rice Research Station to host the 2020 Rice Field Day in a virtual format, via ZOOM. Dr. Ted Wilson gave an overview of rice research in Texas. Dr. Joe Outlaw and Bart Fischer from the Agriculture and Food Policy Center spoke on Farm Policy, and the Generalized System of Preferences. Dr. Thomas Wynn, Coastal Rice and Futures Inc., gave insight to the rice market amid Covid-19. 112 rice producers registered for the Virtual Field Day, yet 64 attended. Evaluation results indicate that 100% of the participants would attend another virtual field day hosted by Texas A&M Agrilife Extension. 80% were completely or mostly satisfied with the Field Day being delivered via a ZOOM format. 100% of the

participants logged in on a personal computer, with 60% identifying familiarity with other virtual formats such as Webex, Skype, and Google Meets. Only 40% identify familiarity with Microsoft Teams. The recording of the 2020 Rice Field Day is posted along with twelve other research highlight videos at <https://beaumont.tamu.edu/RiceFieldDay/>. CEA – Ag/NR Agent, Corrie Bowen hosted his 16th Annual Vocational Ag Teachers Association (VATAT) Pesticide Workshop. The 2020 VATAT was conducted via ZOOM, and was attended by 36 Vocational Agriculture Science Teachers from across Texas. Each participant received 3-CEUs toward their Private Pesticide Applicators License that is used to manage pests annually in their Ag Project Facilities and campus greenhouses. 14 of 36 (39%) completed a retrospective-post evaluation via Qualtrics. 85% estimate an economic benefit from participating in this virtual workshop. 57% of the Ag Teachers adopted the practice of rotating insecticides by group number and by mode of action to avoid building insect resistance that was taught at the 2019 VATAT Pesticide Workshop. Participants increased their awareness of the Texas Administrative Code Title 4, Part 1, Chapter 7, Subchapter H, Division 7: Pest Management Program for School Districts, sections §7.201-§7.205 by 78%. Participants increased their knowledge of fly control technologies by 71.6%.



FAMILY & COMMUNITY HEALTH



June, July, and August continue to be a busy time for FCH agents despite continuing COVID-19 restrictions. FCH agents around the state were asked to contribute their time into the Contact Tracing effort being led by the Texas Department of State Health Services. From June to August, Agent Lori Schindler personally contributed 180 hours of contact tracing toward this statewide effort. Due to restrictions, face-to-face programming has been very limited, so we have been working with agents throughout District 11 to continue programming virtually. Agent Schindler partnered with several agents from across District 11 and a Program Specialist to assist in implementing a virtual Master's of Memory Program. Our program was able to reach about 80 participants. The District 11 TEA-FCH Professional Organization kicked off a live Facebook event which we call Focus Friday. We concentrate on a different topic each week and all District 11 TEA-FCH member agents take a week to create a live Facebook post. Agent Schindler has completed two Focus Friday's, covering Hurricane Preparedness to kick off this busy Hurricane season and flood insurance. Together with both Focus Friday topics I was able to reach approximately 475 people through Facebook. We have had to change the way we reach people, but we have worked hard to learn and to adapt to ever changing situations. During this time Prairie View A&M University Cooperative Extension Program is striving to meet our clientele through virtual educational programming, Zoom calls, and social media. Even though we aren't able to meet face to face with our community...that will not stop our education efforts. Our PVAMU specialists have secured a nutrition grant with the Walmart Foundation to help provide funding for our programs. We also collaborated with The Wharton County Library System (Wharton, East Bernard, El Campo, and Louis) to provide educational videos on their county website, Facebook, and YouTube. According to our feedback, the new programming has been amazing! Our first set of virtual educational videos included: Tie dye at home, store, price comparison, DIY hand sanitizer, and how to make a parfait. After watching each video, our community has the option to fill out an evaluation online or at their local library. COVID-19 financially impacted our community and work force center. To respond to that need, we created a series called Free Financial Friday's. For our new Facebook series, each Friday Agent Kashara Bell presents interesting and helpful financial tips. So far, we have covered topics including resumes, becoming a new mom, marriage and finances, free helpful apps, and how to use a planner successfully. We have also featured special guests from Harris, Waller, and Hidalgo Counties

4-H & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Nineteen Wharton County 4-H members competed at the District Level with their 4-H Recordbooks. Ms. Taylor Watz advanced to State and placed 2nd in the Rabbit category with her senior recordbook. Ms. Lana Foyt also advanced to State, placing 3rd with her senior recordbook in the Food and Nutrition category. On August 3, 2020, Wharton County 4-H held its Annual Awards Ceremony. This year due Covid-19 restriction, the Awards Ceremony was held outdoors under the Wharton County Youth Fair Pavilion. Guests were limited to 4-H members and their parents only. The banquet is held every year to recognize our 4-H members and leaders for their achievements over the past year. This year 61 Wharton County 4-Hers received awards for all their accomplishments during the 2019-2020 4-H year. The 2019-2020 Wharton County 4-H Council Officers handed the reins over to the newly elected 2020-2021 Wharton County 4-H Council Officers. The new officers are: President—Lana Foyt of Wharton; 1st Vice President—Emily Glaze of El Campo; 2nd Vice President—Ralston Chumchal of East Bernard; 3rd Vice President—Keegan Cavness of East Bernard; Secretary—Taylor Watz of El Campo; Reporter—Kasey Burns of El Campo; Health and Safety Officer—Riley Wallis of El Campo.