

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION



extension

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD,
AND NATURAL RESOURCES

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

TARRANT COUNTY

FALL 2024

WELCOME TO OUR TEAM



Alexia Davila

Hello! My name is Alexia Davila, and I am thrilled to step into the role of the EFNEP Extension Assistant for Tarrant County. I have always had a deep appreciation for the vital contributions that Extension Services make to our communities, and it's an incredible honor to contribute to the remarkable work being done here.

I recently returned to Tarrant County after graduating from West Texas A&M with a B.S. in Animal Science. Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with loved ones and reading a good book. Coming from a family of educators, I have always been inspired by the power of learning and the importance of nurturing knowledge in young minds.

Thus far the most rewarding moments in my work come from seeing the children light up with understanding, ask thoughtful questions, and engage actively with new concepts. I find great joy in connecting with the diverse youth throughout Tarrant County and believe that by equipping them with the knowledge and tools they need, we can inspire a generation that prioritizes health and well-being. I am excited to embark on this journey and collaborate with everyone in the community to make a meaningful impact!

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service serves as the checks-and-balances for the livestock showing industry, coordinating the livestock validation process for the State?

This process involves pulling hairs, taking nose prints, notching ears and tattooing animals, in an effort to validate animal ownership and to visually inspect the health of animals. With the help of our amazing Ag Teachers and volunteers, Tarrant County validated more than 700 large animals in 2023, and are on track for more this year!



Pictured left to right: Brittney Meyer, former Horticulture County Extension Agent, Jacklyn Jones-Doyle, ANR County Extension Agent, Amanda Salinas, former CEP 4-H Extension Agent, Kate Marshall, 4-H County Extension Agent & Emily Summers

4-H IS FOR EVERYONE

Kate Marshall, County Extension Agent, 4-H & Youth Development



4-H Youth receiving proclamation at Tarrant County Commissioner's Court on 10-1-2024.

* Pictured left to right: Kate Marshall, County Extension Agent-4H & Youth Development (YD), Jordyn Durr, Matthew Durr, Samantha Duncan, Emma Harvey, Tarrant County Commissioner Manny Ramirez, Precinct 4, Kaden Gordillo, Lane Olmstead, Jack Stoffels, Makayla Schweitzer, Intern, and Jordan Peldyak, CEP-4-H & YD Extension Agent

It's time to enroll your kids in the best positive youth development program in Texas! The new 4-H year began September 1, 2024, in all 254 counties in Texas. As part of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, the Texas 4-H Youth Development Program provides inclusive opportunities to youth ages 8-18 in grades 3-12 for personal growth, community service, and fun. Texas 4-H reaches around 500,000 youth per year.

By joining a club in their county, youth have the opportunity to participate in one or many projects, with 43 diverse options to choose from in Agriculture and Livestock, Family and Community Health, Leadership and Citizenship, Natural Resources, and STEM. Youth gain life skills while giving back to their community and making new friends.

Research shows Texas 4-H members excel in comparison to other Texas students. Youth who are involved in 4-H programs are four times more likely to give back to their communities, two times more likely to make healthier lifestyle choices and two times more likely to participate in STEM activities.

"Because there is such a variety of project options, every young person can do something in which they are interested," Texas 4-H Youth Development Program Director Dr. Montza Williams said. "Developing personal interests under the leadership of older

teens or adult volunteers generates many learning opportunities and bridges past and present. Members get to explore interests in a positive environment with the safety net of caring mentors."

To join 4-H, youth pay a \$25 fee, which increases to \$30 November 1, 2024. 4-H registration takes place online and that information or link can be provided by your local County Extension Agent or found on texas4-h.tamu.edu.

In addition to the youth and AgriLife Extension personnel in the program, adult volunteers assist Agents with 4-H programming in the county, by providing leadership and education in the various project areas.

"Our volunteer leaders get to share their passions with the 4-H members," Williams said. "Texas 4-H volunteers love what they do and enjoy sharing their interests in particular projects with young people. They also have a desire to see members grow and become the best individual they can be."

Adult volunteers also register online and pay \$10 to be considered a registered 4-H volunteer. If you are interested in volunteering with the Tarrant County program, contact Kate Marshall, County Extension Agent for more information and how to get signed up via email kate.marshall@ag.tamu.edu.

WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE CONFERENCE

Jacklyn Jones-Doyle, County Extension Agent, Agriculture and Natural Resources



The second annual Women in Ag Conference was held on September 10 and 11, 2024 at the historic Fort Worth Stockyards, bringing together 40 women from various regions across Texas for two days of learning, collaboration, and empowerment. The event was specifically designed to support and elevate women working within the agricultural sector, offering them valuable tools to enhance their professional and personal lives.



Participants were provided with opportunities to strengthen critical skills such as problem-solving, record-keeping, and decision-making—essential components for success in agriculture. The agenda featured a wide array of topics aimed at addressing the unique challenges faced by women in this field, focusing on bolstering financial security, improving access to management resources, and addressing key areas like risk management and legal liabilities.

Additionally, the conference emphasized practical guidance on navigating complex issues related to family estate planning, an important aspect of sustaining long-term agricultural operations. The diverse and tailored subjects ensured that attendees left with actionable knowledge and strategies to apply to their businesses and personal lives, making the conference a significant resource for women in agriculture seeking growth and resilience in an ever-evolving industry.

Stephanie Bradley Fryer, the keynote speaker, is a 5th-generation Texas landowner with deep roots in agriculture. Raised on a cotton, wheat, and commercial cattle operation, she has dedicated her life and career to supporting those in the agricultural industry. Stephanie continues to manage her family's land near Stamford, Texas, and partners with her husband, Gates, who is the 4th generation on his family's ranch in Southwest Oklahoma, where they raise cattle and wheat.

In addition to her work in agriculture, Stephanie is also an attorney who has represented farmers, ranchers, landowners, and rural Americans in a variety of legal matters. Her expertise spans estate planning, oil and gas issues, real estate transactions, and other agricultural-related concerns throughout Texas.

Joining us as speakers were a diverse group of experts, including Arianna Chavez from AgriVision Farm Management; John Tyson from the USDA Farm Service Agency; Brandt Self and Paige Todd from Clifton Larson Allen LLP; Dr. Blake Bennett from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension; Donna Patrick from Sunset Hill Tree Farm; and Tiffany Dowell Lashmet, also with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. Each speaker brought valuable insights and expertise from their respective fields, contributing to a well-rounded and informative conference.

This event would not have been possible without the unwavering support of the Women in Ag planning committee. We extend our sincere thanks to Martha Garrett, Julie Bryant, Stacy Fox, Diane Johnson, Jason Johnson, Sherry Flow, and Gabby Harris for their commitment and hard work in bringing the conference to life.

We are also incredibly grateful to our sponsors - AgTrust, Heritage Land Bank, Russell Feed Store, Reata Restaurant, Capital Farm Credit, and Merck Animal Health—whose generous contributions helped make this event a reality.



Events like this thrive on the backing of dedicated individuals and organizations, and we're excited to announce that planning for next year's conference will begin soon.

Stay tuned for more details!

PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC, RESEARCH & EXTENSION CONFERENCE

Jordan Peldyak, Extension Agent,
Cooperative Extension Program, 4-H & Youth Development



Prairie View Language Access Committee

At the end of August when our programming comes to an end, and we gear up for another year, we get to rejuvenate ourselves by attending the annual Academics, Research, and Extension Conference in Houston.

The purpose of this conference is to connect with fellow Prairie View A&M Extension Agents from around the state of Texas and learn how to better ourselves and our clientele through professional development workshops. In the virtual world we live in now, sometimes it can be hard to find time to meet in person, so this conference allows great in-person interaction across all three pillars of the Prairie View A&M University College of Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources-Academic Professors, Researchers, and Extension Agents. When it comes to innovative programs that reach the people where they are, we can do that best through collaboration with all three pillars of the college. Research identifies the issues, and academics and Extension Agents bring research-based education to the classroom and the communities across Texas.

The conference also allows the statewide committee members to come together to share their successes and difficulties from the previous year. One of the highlights of attending the conference was the meeting with the Language Access Committee. This is a state-wide committee that strives to make every community member feel more comfortable in participating in Extension programming by translating information, allowing for disability accommodations and providing interpretation when needed.

Some of the professional development sessions I attended covered topics such as, creating excellent programs, how to become great, the power of artificial intelligence (using AI Copilot), and focusing on your mental health. All of these sessions were around the overall theme of the conference which was taking our education "back to the streets."

Some of the key takeaways I will carry from the sessions include:

- Know all aspects of the community you are serving. If you don't know your audience, the community members may not want to attend your programs.
- Make sure to focus and provide time for yourself.
- Extension is a service-related career and it is easy to work all the time without setting boundaries.
- Artificial intelligence is taking the world by storm. It can help all of us if we are using it the right way. Developing documents and presentations may start becoming faster with the Microsoft Copilot feature. Copilot can generate documents, presentations and flyers just by typing in key words and phrases Editing and finding where your information is coming from is something that may become a challenge.

The Academic, Research, and Extension Conference is a great annual conference, and I look forward to using my new skills in the coming year.



Prairie View 4-H Agents around the state and Program Leaders

DEMONSTRATION GARDEN

Makayla Schweitzer, Intern

Today, we're excited to explore the project initiated by former Tarrant County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Horticulture Agent, Brittney Meyer, right here at the Tarrant County Extension Office. This project focuses on creating a diverse demonstration garden on the building's fourth floor.

With the collaboration of the Master Gardeners, Tarrant County Facilities Management, and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension-Tarrant County, this vision will be brought to life. The garden will showcase Earth-Kind® plants, which mean they use research-proven techniques to provide maximum garden and landscape enjoyment while preserving and protecting the environment.

Among the featured Earth-Kind® plants will be the Desert Willow, Red Yucca, Rock Rose, and more, which are all selected for their resilience and beauty. Also, the demonstration garden will not only serve as a visual showcase but will also include educational components, providing valuable resources for visitors to learn about gardening practices.

We look forward to seeing this project flourish!



Makayla Schweitzer

Hi! I am Makayla Schweitzer, an intern at Texas A&M AgriLife Extension – Tarrant County. I am currently a senior at Tarleton State University pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Services and Development. Throughout my studies, I've developed a strong interest in Agricultural Development. During my time at Tarleton, I've had the opportunity to come do this internship as well as, be a part of Tarleton Ag Mechanics Club, Phi Mu Sorority, getting to be an Ag Mechanics student judge at Fort Worth, San Antonio, and Houston shows, and getting to help with CDEs and LDEs as a judge. I am eager to continue at Tarrant County Extension Office to help me gain practical skills and a deeper understanding of the agricultural industry. Also, within this internship I get to connect with others who share similar interests.

YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROJECT MEET-UP

JOIN US AT THE FORT WORTH POLICE DEPARTMENT NORTH DIVISION COMMUNITY ROOM

8755 N. RIVERSIDE DR.
FORT WORTH, TX 76244
6:30 PM - 8:00 PM

DATES:
11.7.24 12.5.24 1.9.25
2.13.25 3.13.25 4.10.25

QUESTIONS: CONTACT SANGI HALL
MANAGER@KELLER4-H.ORG
817-301-2700

Presented by Tarrant County's
Prairie View CEP -
Community Economic Development
Extension Agent, Chelse Lilly

- FIND SCHOLARSHIPS
- START A BUSINESS
- MARKET A BUSINESS
- MANAGE PROFIT AND LOSS
- FIND A CAREER
- WRITE A RESUME
- WRITE A COVER LETTER
- DEVELOP AN ELEVATOR SPEECH AND MORE!

The Members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Court of Texas Cooperating. This material was funded by USDA's supplemental nutrition assistance program - SNAP. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension is an equal opportunity employer and program provider.





TREE TRAINING SEASON

Laura Miller, County Extension Agent,
Commercial Horticulture

Right along with pumpkins, pumpkin spices, mums, gardening and homecoming, trees get a little extra attention each autumn. They deserve it. They are the largest, most valuable components of a landscape. They provide food and shelter for wildlife, shade in the heat of summer, and protection from wind. When the weather is right, some of them provide spectacular fall color.

As deciduous trees start to lose their leaves, it's time to think about tree training and pruning. Time spent training a young tree is a great investment in a long and healthy future. [Texas Tree Selector \(tamu.edu\)](https://www.tamu.edu/tree-selector/).

Mature trees also benefit from fall and winter attention, but their care often requires special skills and equipment. It can be too dangerous for the average DIYer. While no one has ever been injured by an improperly pruned Nandina, falling tree limbs are a common source of injuries and even fatalities. Falling limbs, along with the risk of electrical contact and falls from significant heights, make tree work more dangerous than any other landscape work. Safety training, teamwork and personal protective equipment are all essential in tree care. If you are fortunate enough to have large trees in your landscape, you will from time to time need to hire an arborist. The last few years have been tough on trees. We've had record cold, two extremely hot, dry summers, an uptick in Oak Wilt incidence and the establishment of a new invasive pest, the Emerald Ash Borer. It's time for a little tree TLC.

Tips for Hiring an Arborist:

1. Look for a Certified Arborist. The International Society of Arboriculture, www.isa-arbor.com, offers some of the most widely recognized certifications due to the scope and history of the organization and its programs. Certified Arborists have passed a standardized exam and agree to adhere to a code of ethics.
2. In addition to checking the list and certified individuals as described above, another great way to start is by asking friends and neighbors whose landscapes you admire for recommendations.
3. Always ask questions about both the business itself and about the practices and products that will be used. Ask to see any required licenses and require proof of insurance. Educate yourself about best practices and remember that you **want** to pay for expertise in addition to services provided. A good landscape service provider will allow you to have a more beautiful and valuable landscape.

If you are ready, we will offer testing here at the Tarrant Plaza Building on Friday, November 15.

BUDGET-FRIENDLY MEAL PREPARATION: TIPS FROM YOUR LOCAL DIETETIC INTERN

Robin Hall, Extension Agent, Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program



Intern season is in full swing with the Tarrant County Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). Our current intern, Tracie Allen, has been spending time in our office acquiring hands-on experience in community nutrition. Tracie is a student in Tarrant County College's Nutrition & Dietetics Program, completing both coursework and supervised practice, with the end goal of sitting for the Nutrition Dietetic Technician, Registered credentialing exam.

Through her coursework in the Nutrition & Dietetics Program, Tracie also plans to earn a certificate in Healthy Meal Planning, which teaches students how to create menus that meet the nutritional requirements for the public. Tracie has so graciously agreed to share some healthy meal planning tips with us. Keep reading to find out how you can incorporate some of these ideas yourself.

Consuming nutritious food does not require an extravagant expense. Meal prepping can assist in maintaining a healthy diet while simultaneously saving time and money with a little planning and strategic purchasing. The following guide will demonstrate how to prepare nutritious, flavorful meals without exceeding your budget. Bid farewell to costly takeaways and welcome the affordability of home-cooked meals.

Step 1. Maintain a focus on straightforward recipes. Recipes that are straightforward and require minimal ingredients are typically more cost-effective. Concentrate on one-pot/pan dishes, such as stir-fries, soups, and sheet pan entrees.

Step 2. Prioritize seasonal produce. Seasonal fruits and vegetables are fresher and more affordable. Seek out locally grown produce at grocery

stores or farmer's markets. Incorporate root vegetables such as potatoes, carrots, and squash during the colder months, and berries and leafy greens during the milder seasons.

The key to a successful meal prep session is to optimize your time in the kitchen by preparing dishes with minimal ingredients. The following are a few recipe suggestions for breakfast and lunch.

Breakfast: Overnight Oats

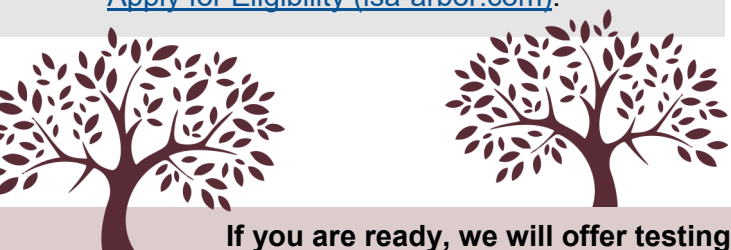
Overnight oats are an easy, nutritious breakfast rich in protein and fiber; preparing numerous portions simultaneously is effortless. Oats, yogurt, chia seeds, and milk of your preference should be combined in jars. Add fruit on top and refrigerate overnight. When purchased in abundance, rolled oats are exceedingly cost-effective. To reduce expenses even further, try using preserved or seasonal fruit.

Lunch: Sheet Pan Poultry and Vegetables

This meal offers fiber, protein, and healthy fats. It is effortless to prepare, and the vegetables can be substituted according to the current season. Combine your chicken and preferred vegetables with olive oil, seasoning, and herbs. Spread the mixture onto a baking sheet and roast at 400° for 40-45 minutes. Separate your chicken and veggie mixture into containers for lunch throughout the week.

There you have it!

You have now prepared breakfast and lunch for the upcoming week. Now you don't have to figure out what to eat during these meals because you have already done the work and saved money along the way.



HOLIDAY HACKS FOR A HEALTHIER YOU

Alaina Woolsey, County Extension Agent,
Family & Community Health



HEALTHY EATING

- Have a platter of raw or blanched veggies with your favorite low-calorie dip to nibble on while you are cooking or waiting to eat.
- Remember to include veggies on your plate! They will help fill you up and keep you from overeating other high calorie and high fat foods on the table.

HEALTHY SUBSTITUTIONS

- Use healthy cooking methods (e.g. boil, bake or grill instead of frying).
- Use low fat or fat free dairy in place of heavy creams and greek yogurt in place of sour cream or mayonnaise.
- Choose low or no sodium canned goods when available.

BE ACTIVE

- Try taking a walk with your family, play frisbee, soccer, catch or touch football while waiting to eat.
- Celebrations are a time to slow down and catch up with your friends and loved ones. Play games, volunteer, or spend time outdoors being active.

FALL IN LOVE WITH FITNESS

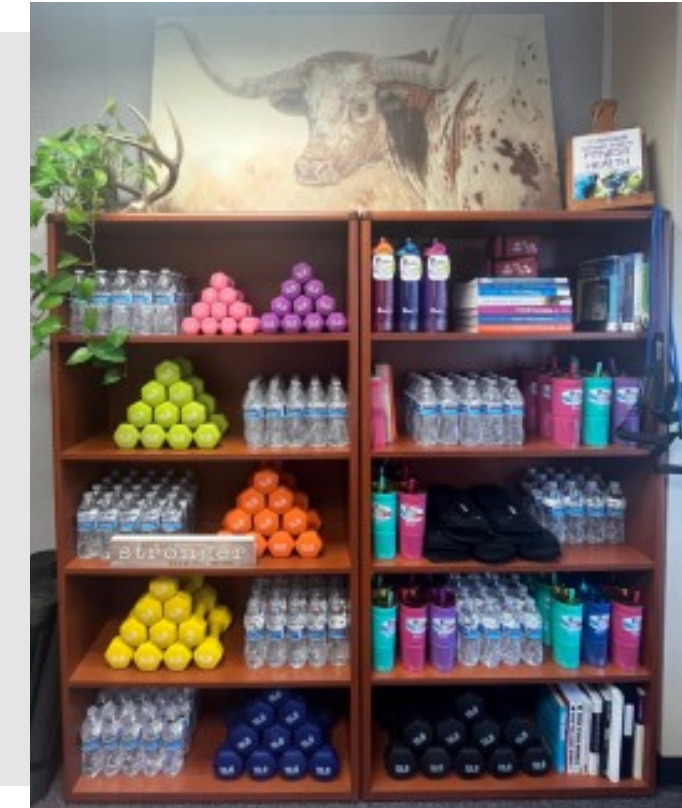
Christa DeStefano, County Extension Agent, Family & Community Health

Fall has finally arrived in Tarrant County and so has our Strong People Strong Bodies equipment! As temps outside are dropping, our ability to get outdoors and move is increasing. We know that exercise, including strength training, is good for our health and wellness.

Did you know that physical activity/exercise has been indicated as primary prevention for 35 chronic conditions? Despite this knowledge, only 12% of women and 17% of men engage in strength-based exercises. Research has shown that unless we find an activity enjoyable, we are less likely to engage in those healthy behaviors. This is referred to as the "Intention-Behavior Gap" (IBG). IBGs exist when the intention to make a positive health behavior change is apparent, but a significant divide prevents the best laid plans from translating into adopted health behaviors.

Strong People Strong Bodies (SPSB) is a 12-week strength training program that aims to bridge the gap between physical activity intentions and behaviors by removing barriers to exercise participation and imparting fun into an easy-to-learn fitness class! Class sizes are intentionally capped at four participants to foster motivation, promote self-efficacy and provide personalized attention.

**Contact our office
to learn more!**



Why Strength Training?

- Improved Mental Health & Wellness
- Weight Management/Maintenance
- Chronic Disease Prevention/Mitigation
- Sleep Improvement
- Strengthening of Bone
- Arthritis Relief
- Glucose Control
- Balance Restoration/Reduction of Falls

MOVING BETTER, FEELING BETTER, AND STAYING HEALTHY

Sanci Hall, Extension Agent, Better Living for Texans

I am not sure what activity you dread the most after a long day of work. Maybe it's doing the dishes, running an errand, or perhaps even trying to unwind while your to-do list continues to gain items. For me, it's realizing that I haven't stretched all day. Just thinking about stretching can feel like one more task to check off my list, but it shouldn't feel that way.

We spend our days sitting for hours, staring at screens, and moving at a pace that feels non-stop. It's easy to forget how important stretching and flexibility are for our physical fitness and well-being. I know that when I finally make time to stretch—whether in the morning, after work, or before bed—I feel so much better. The tension in my neck eases, my lower back pain softens, and suddenly, I feel more relaxed.

Just like I advocate to schedule our meals or physical activity, we need to build stretching into our daily routine. Stretching regularly offers real benefits backed by science.

Stretching isn't just something we should do before or after exercise—it's a vital part of keeping our muscles and joints healthy. According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), regular stretching can improve flexibility by 20%–50% over time. Imagine being able to move more freely and reduce those aches and pains simply by dedicating a few minutes a day to stretching!

One of the key reasons to stretch regularly is injury prevention. The NIH highlights that stretching can reduce the risk of muscle injuries by approximately 30% when included in your warm-up routine. Stretching helps to lengthen muscles, increase blood flow, and

prepare your body for movement, making it less likely that you'll pull a muscle or strain yourself during physical activities.



But it's not just about preventing injuries during workouts. Harvard Medical School points out that athletes who incorporate dynamic stretching—like leg swings or arm circles—into their routines see up to a 9.6% improvement in performance. Better performance and fewer injuries? It sounds like a win-win! But what if we're not worried about our sports performance? When you stretch regularly, you can increase your joint range of motion by 8%–20% depending on the muscle group. According to the American Council on Exercise (ACE), these improvements in range of motion can also help you perform everyday activities with greater ease, from reaching for something on a high shelf to bending over to tie your shoes. Daily stretching has been shown to reduce muscle stiffness by 30%–40%, which means less discomfort throughout the day and faster recovery after physical activity.

If you, like me, deal with chronic lower back pain, you'll be happy to know that regular stretching can reduce this pain by up to 55%. Incorporating stretches that target the lower back, hamstrings, and hips can make a world of difference.

The benefits of regular stretching are undeniable and making it a daily habit doesn't have to be overwhelming. Start small, with just 5–10 minutes of stretching each day. You can stretch first thing in the morning to wake up your muscles, or at the end of the day to unwind and relax before bed. Over time, your body will thank you.

Next time you're sitting feeling stiff or winding down after a busy day, take a few minutes to stretch. It might just become your favorite part of the day. And remember, it's not just about touching your toes—it's about moving better, feeling better, and staying healthy.

References:

- <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>
- <https://www.acsm.org>
- <https://www.mayoclinic.org>
- <https://www.health.harvard.edu>
- <https://www.acefitness.org>

GREAT THINGS ARE GROWING HERE

FALL UPDATE

Melanie Earley, Eat Well Feel Well Program Assistant



In July we hosted both Learn Grow Eat & GO curriculum training for teachers and Campus Coordinator training. At Campus Coordinator training, we demonstrated all four components of our project (Adult & Student Gardening and Adult & Student Nutrition) for our Coordinators. Photo to the left shows EFNEP Adult Educator Dolores Haley showing Coordinators the physical fitness portion of our Adult Nutrition course. Along with their teachers, these Coordinators have gone back to their campuses and hit the ground running. Each of the 11 communities now have vegetable garden beds, and the EFNEP Adult and Youth classes have begun on campuses. Every participating family is leaving their nutrition class with a FREE bag of groceries each week! We are just getting started and great things are growing here.



Pictured above clockwise from top left: 1) Students at Kirkpatrick Elementary work in groups to construct their Know & Show Sombreros. 2) Students at Bishop Elementary are showing off their Know & Show Sombreros. 3) Short Elementary students learn kitchen skills like grating and cutting. 4) Sagamore Hill Elementary parents participate in Healthy Bites Healthy Moves (Adult Nutrition class). 5) Bags of free groceries line the hall at Heritage Elementary. 6) Healthy Heroes are teaching Bishop Elementary students about MyPlate. 7) & 8) Paper towel gardening is implemented at Heritage and Bishop Elementaries. 9) Students helped build garden beds at Rufino Mendoza Elementary.