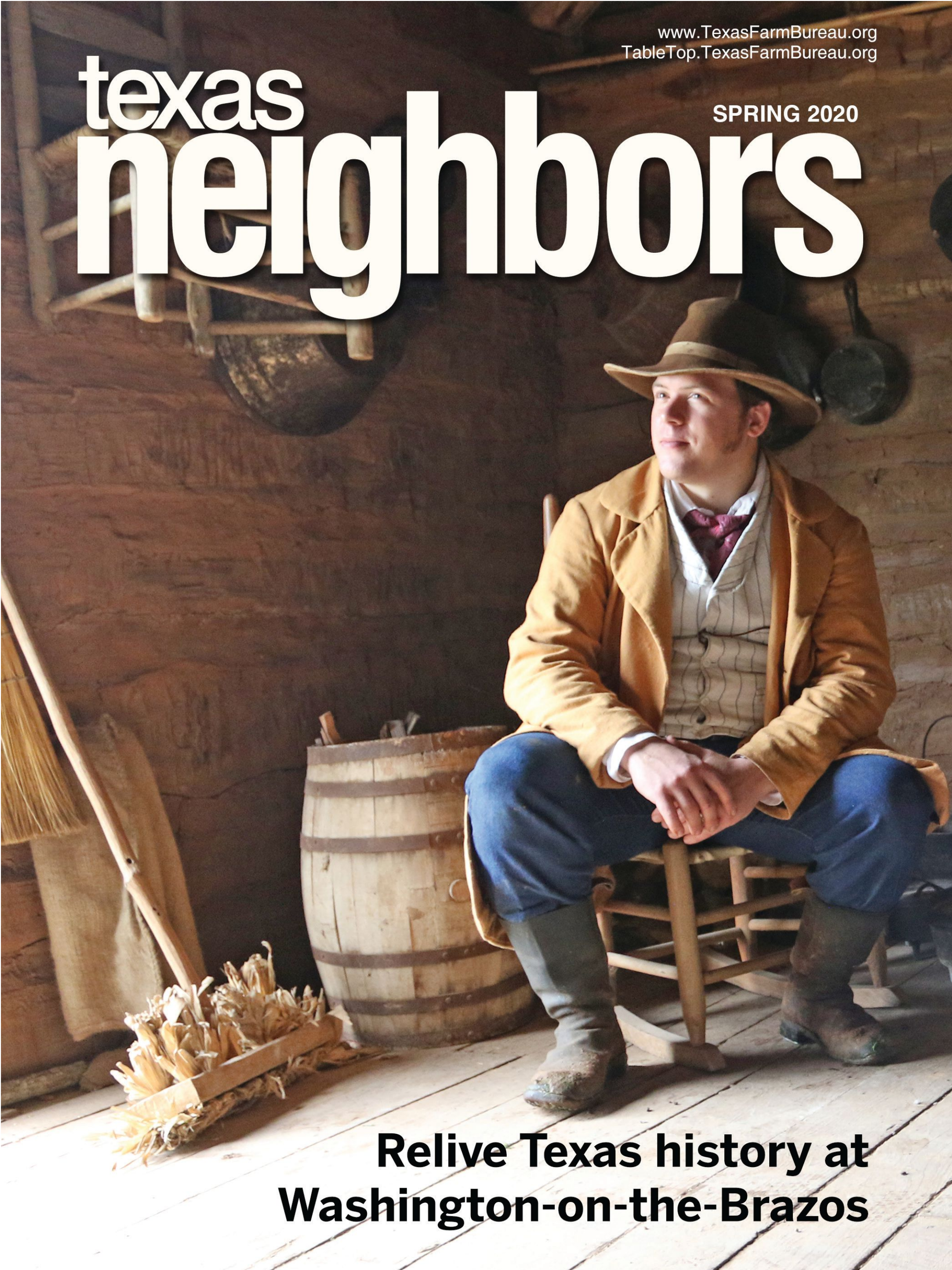


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Addressing challenges of COVID-19



By Russell Boening
President
Texas Farm Bureau

As of this writing, our nation is in the grips of a national health emergency.

Making good decisions during this unprecedented time is a focus for my family and me, as I'm sure it is for yours.

The same is true for your organization. Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) and Affiliated Companies continue to closely monitor developments related to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic.

TFB and Affiliated Companies have taken proactive steps to maintain a safe workplace for all employees, members and contractors. We are committed to the continuity of our business operations and serving you and the more than 529,000 other member-families.

Several actions to help with social distancing and to minimize the potential spread of the virus have been implemented. TFB and Affiliated Companies will continue to evaluate additional measures for COVID-19, as needed.

We appreciate the understanding of you and all of our member-families and everyone associated with TFB and Affiliated Companies as we work

together to overcome these unique challenges.

On a broader scale, America's farmers and ranchers are committed to doing all we can to help win the fight against this pandemic and ensure the health, safety and prosperity of all Americans.

It is a national security issue.

While the food supply chain remains strong, several issues are being monitored and addressed to maintain its strength. These include ensuring an adequate farm workforce, having clear response plans for packing and processing plants and closely monitoring for market manipulation.

Your organization is vigilant in identifying and helping to address issues to protect our food supply and ensure continued access to it.

Meat packing plants, dairy processors, ethanol plants and other processing facilities all play a vital role in delivering the food and fuel Americans will continue to depend on.

Social distancing policies, which follow key health directives, could have a significant impact on the processing plants that drive America's supply chain. Additional impacts could include access to seed, fertilizer and crop protection tools farmers need to grow a healthy crop.

Maintaining stable and fair markets is especially critical at times like these. Farm Bureau urged the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to work with the appropriate federal agencies to ensure U.S. farmers are not unfairly disadvantaged during this unique period.

Farmers and ranchers are concerned about market manipulation, and Farm Bureau urged USDA to monitor the situation to protect them, as well as consumers, from price manipulation. In the fresh produce market, growers are concerned about possible dumping of products from other countries.

These are just a few examples of how your organization has responded to the national health emergency.

There is a lot beyond our control and still unknown as we face this crisis together. For farmers and ranchers, our mission hasn't changed. We are committed to rising every day to grow and harvest the food, fiber and fuel we all depend on in this great nation.

Stay safe and take care of each other.



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TFB opens doors to agriculture with new exhibit

By Jennifer Dorsett
Field Editor

Agriculture may seem like a mystery to those who don't live on a farm or out in the country.

But Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) is opening the doors to agriculture through its new exhibit, Doorways to Agriculture.

Behind each door is more information about modern farms and ranches in Texas.

Planet Agriculture, TFB's former exhibit, was a longtime fixture at fairs, stock shows and other events, giving individuals from all walks of life the opportunity to learn more about Texas agriculture.

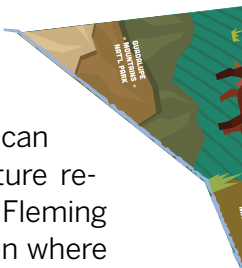
And while Planet Agriculture was well-received, it was showing its age.

"Planet Agriculture had been our exhibit for many years, and it was in need of a major update," TFB Director of Urban Relations Dakota Fleming said. "Doorways to Agriculture is a new way to bring people in and expose them to the diversity of Texas agriculture. It's very interactive, and it's just a good way to show how so many things—fireworks, tacos, office supplies, housing materials—relate back to agriculture."

The exhibit, which debuted at the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo, features state-of-the-art touchscreen kiosks, oversized interactive "books" for children and a theater screening videos produced by TFB that feature a variety of Texas farmers and ranchers.

A walk-through trailer full of displays and games that encourage all ages to learn more about where food, fiber and more comes from is also part of the exhibit.

"In the walk-through trailer, you can walk inside and see how agriculture relates back to your everyday life," Fleming said. "We have a large touchscreen where visitors choose a door that opens into a room in the average American house. So, you may walk into the kitchen, bedroom or another area of your house, and there's a game to find ag-related products. And it's not always what people think. There are so many more household items that come from agriculture than we often realize."





For example, corn is used in more than 4,000 products—and the list is growing every day! Soda, salad dressing, yogurt, ice cream and more all contain corn products. It's also in cosmetics, toothpaste, soaps, deodorants, medicine, bandages and diapers.

Doorways to Agriculture explores some of these uses, along with other major Texas crops. The trailer exhibit also touches on soil science and offers up a virtual “meeting” with real Texans in agriculture.

In addition to the major attractions, there is a live animal display where visitors can see a variety of livestock, such as pigs or goats.

The theme is meant to help people understand agriculture's role in our everyday lives, as well as to encourage youth to consider careers in agriculture or agriculture-related industries.

And agricultural careers are more wide-ranging than farming and ranching, Fleming noted. There are a variety of roles in agricultural industries including salespeople, scientists, statisticians,

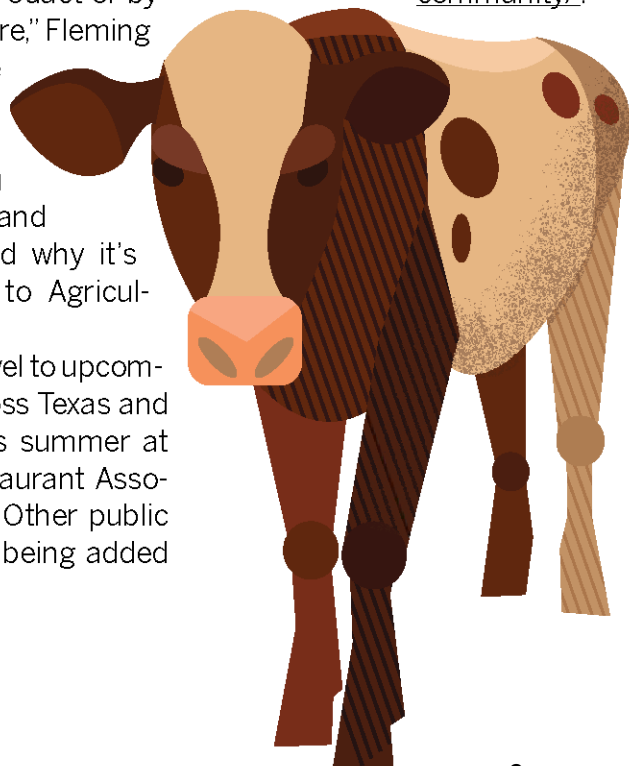


educators, communications experts and more.

“No matter which door you walk through in your house, there will be an item that’s a product or by-product of agriculture,” Fleming said. “If you come into the exhibit, you’ll see all the doors that you can go through, and you’ll understand why it’s called Doorways to Agriculture.”

The exhibit will travel to upcoming stock shows across Texas and will make a stop this summer at the 2020 Texas Restaurant Association Marketplace. Other public events are currently being added to the schedule.

For more information and to check if Doorways to Ag will be in your area soon, visit <https://texasfarmbureau.org/youth/ag-in-the-community/>.



Landowners facing eminent domain condemnation have rights



**By Julie Tomascik
Editor**

At the intersection of a growing state and private property rights lies an important issue—eminent domain.

Landowners across Texas are facing condemnation of their property for pipelines, transmission lines, railroads and other infrastructure projects, both public and private.

“We understand that infrastructure is needed and that the Lone Star State is booming,” Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) President Russell Boening said. “We know that we must have the means to move people, goods and energy across Texas, but private property owners should be treated fairly when forced to give up their property.”

TFB plans to help. The organization is launching a campaign to provide property owners with more information about the eminent domain process.

“It’s important to be an informed landowner. Know your rights, and know what those entities are allowed to do,” Boening said. “You are your strongest advocate for your property and your rights.”

TFB published *Eminent Domain in Texas: A Landowner’s Guide* to help Texans better understand the condemnation process, the laws regarding eminent domain and landowners’ rights.

“Eminent domain, takings, condemnation—these words can spark a wide range of emotions,” Boening said. “You feel angry, confused and even intimidated, and it can be tough to know what decision to make.”

TFB worked with Tiffany Dow-

ell Lashmet, who is an associate professor and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension specialist. Lashmet focuses her work on legal issues affecting Texas farmers, ranchers and landowners on a variety of topics, including agricultural leases, water law, eminent domain, easements and landowner liability.

The handbook details the rights of property owners to just compensation, including fair market value based on the highest and best use of the property, being compensated for damages to re-

sources, project maps and news stories on the organization’s website at www.texasfarmbureau.org/eminentdomain.

As part of the campaign, the website will be updated throughout the year to keep landowners informed.

TFB also plans to host meetings across the state to help landowners learn more about eminent domain and their rights.

“At each meeting, we’ll have eminent domain professionals and our own TFB staff in attendance

ing dates, times and locations. Details will also be made available to county Farm Bureaus to help share the information.

“We hope this handbook, the meetings and additional resources we make available will empower and educate landowners to better protect their land, their operations and their livelihood,” Boening said.

A database of companies that have eminent domain authority is available on the Texas Comptroller’s website at www.comptroller.texas.gov/transparency.

“We know that we must have the means to move people, goods and energy across Texas, but private property owners should be treated fairly when forced to give up their property.”
—TFB President Russell Boening

maintaining property and moving and relocation expenses.

It covers the entire condemnation process from the initial offer to a final settlement for just compensation.

Another important topic in the handbook is the easement negotiation process. The easement agreement between the landowner and the condemning entity is critical, because it defines the relationship between the two parties for the use of the easement for many years into the future.

The handbook also covers other topics like right of entry permits and selecting an attorney.

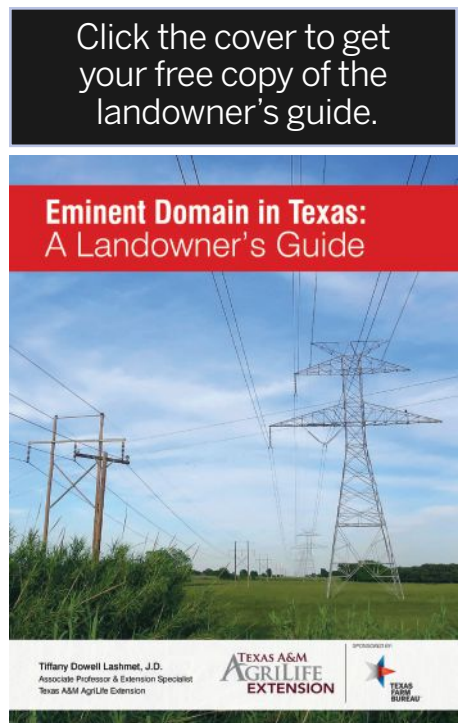
In addition to launching the handbook, TFB has updated re-

to discuss the eminent domain process, projects in the area, landowners’ rights and much more,” Boening said. “This is a chance for all landowners, whether or not you are currently facing condemnation, to learn more and ask questions.”

The website will include meet-

To download a copy of the eminent domain handbook, visit www.texasfarmbureau.org/eminentdomain.

Additional landowner resources, updates on eminent domain meetings and more will be published on TFB’s website as they are made available.



2020 YOUTH LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

By Jennifer Dorsett
Field Editor

What sets great leaders apart from everyone else?

Through Texas Farm Bureau's (TFB) Youth Leadership Conference (YLC), incoming high school juniors and seniors participate in a variety of activities to help answer that question.

"YLC is one of our organization's most important events each year, because during those three days, we just really focus on the students and work with them to help them reach their full potential," Mia Balko, TFB director of Youth Outreach, said. "It's an invaluable experience for the kids who get to attend."

The weeklong conference, set for June 8-12 at Tarleton State University in Stephenville, focuses on the free enterprise system, constitutional government, patriotism, goal-setting activities and leadership skills.

Through group projects and activities, students gain a deeper understanding of these concepts and develop personal skills that put them on the path to future success.

And it's fun.

Attendees experience life on a college campus, establish lifelong friendships with other high school students from around Texas and grow their self-confidence.

"We hear it from the students who've attended over and over," Balko said. "So many of them come back to us and say 'YLC changed my life! I used to be so shy, but now I'm not,' or 'I used to be uncomfortable with public speaking, but now I feel prepared and confident.' And we watch it happen over that week. You can see them change throughout the process. Without a doubt, YLC influences our youth to become leaders in their chosen fields and throughout the rest of their lives."

High school students are selected by county Farm Bureaus. Transportation, rooms, meals and a small tuition fee are financed by the sponsoring county Farm Bureaus.

YLC attendance is the first step for students to participate in the Free Enterprise Speech Contest, in which students compete for scholarships.

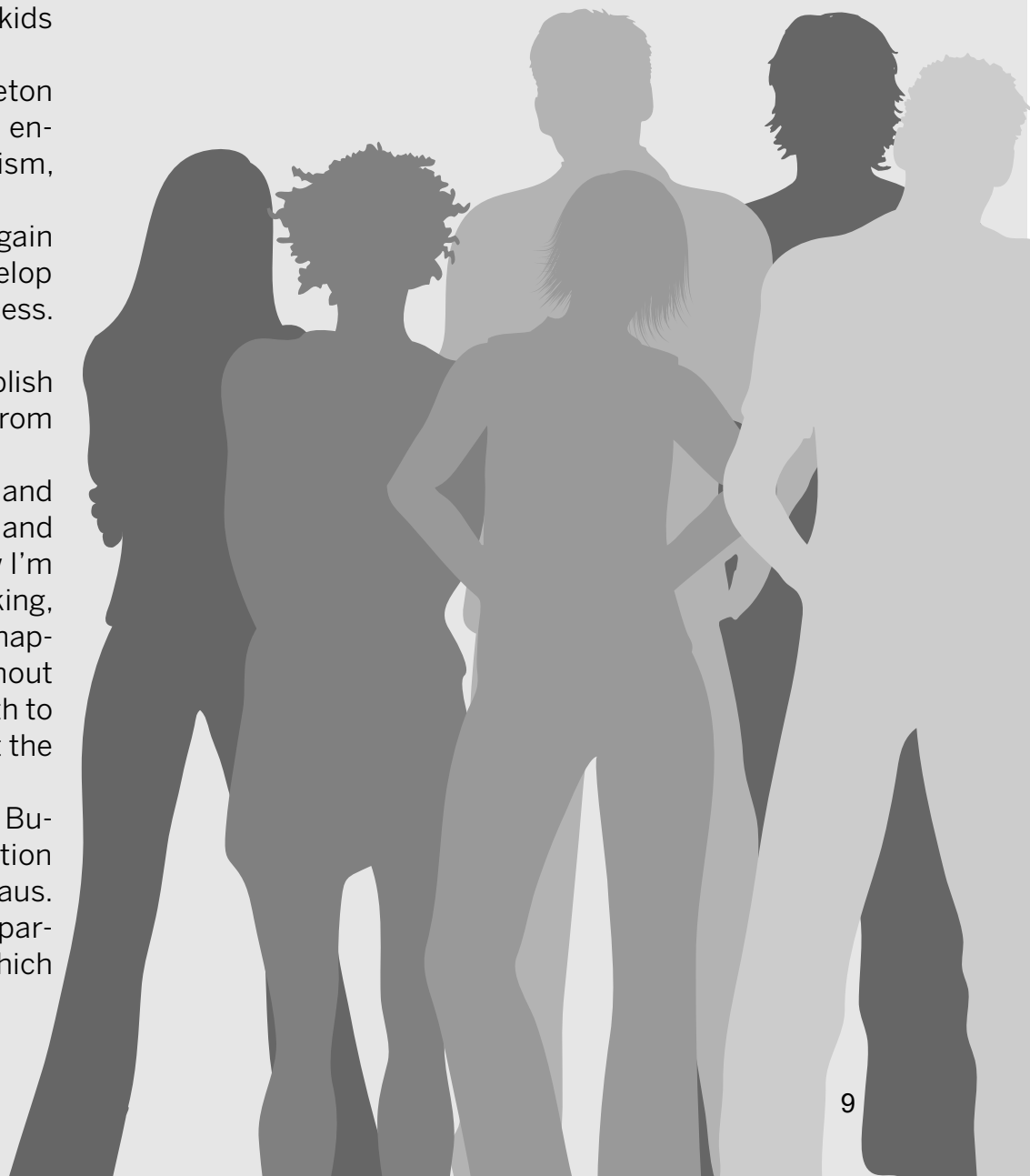
YLC applications are now open on the TFB website.

Visit <https://texasfarmbureau.org/youth/youth-opportunities/> and scroll down to Youth Leadership Conference. Then, follow the directions to complete the application process.

The deadline to apply is May 1.

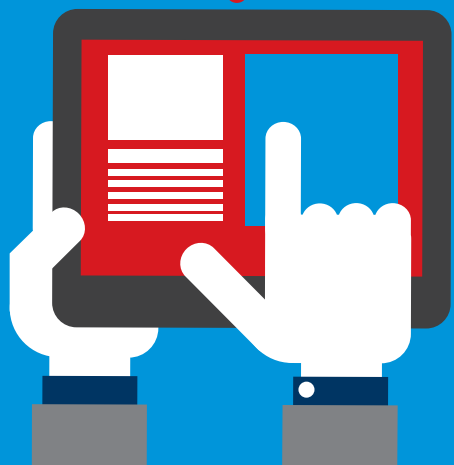
Selected students will be notified by their county Farm Bureau.

"I would absolutely recommend every student who's interested to apply as soon as possible," Balko said. "I'd like to wish them all good luck and am looking forward to meeting our next group of future leaders this summer!"



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2020 Texas Farm Bureau

PHOTO CONTEST



It's time once again for the annual Texas Farm Bureau photography contest, when you or someone you know can share your best pictures with the entire Lone Star State and maybe even win a cash prize. The deadline for photo submissions in the 2020 contest is June 1. The contest is limited to members of the Texas Farm Bureau and their immediate families. Rural settings and rural lifestyles are the preferred themes for all submissions, and contestants are limited to one entry per person. Four top winners will be selected and published in the July edition of Texas Agriculture and the summer edition of Texas Neighbors. First place will be awarded a \$250 cash prize, second place will receive \$200 and two honorable mentions will receive \$100 each.

As in years past, both digital and printed photographs may be submitted. To enter, follow these simple rules: Digital entries should be e-mailed to photocontest@txfb.org. For publication purposes, photos must be at least 1024 X 768 pixels or higher. Print entries may be mailed to Photo Contest, TFB Communications Division, P.O. Box 2689, Waco, TX 76702-2689. A self-addressed, stamped envelope needs to accompany your print photo entry if you want your photograph returned. Include a brief description regarding the entry, plus the participant's name, address, telephone number and valid Texas Farm Bureau membership number. More information is available at <https://txfb.us/photocontest20>.

CORN = GOLDEN KERNELS OF TEXAS

Ever wonder the process corn undergoes to make it on your dinner plate or in your gas tank? Each year, Texas farmers plant and harvest millions of acres of corn to do just that and more!

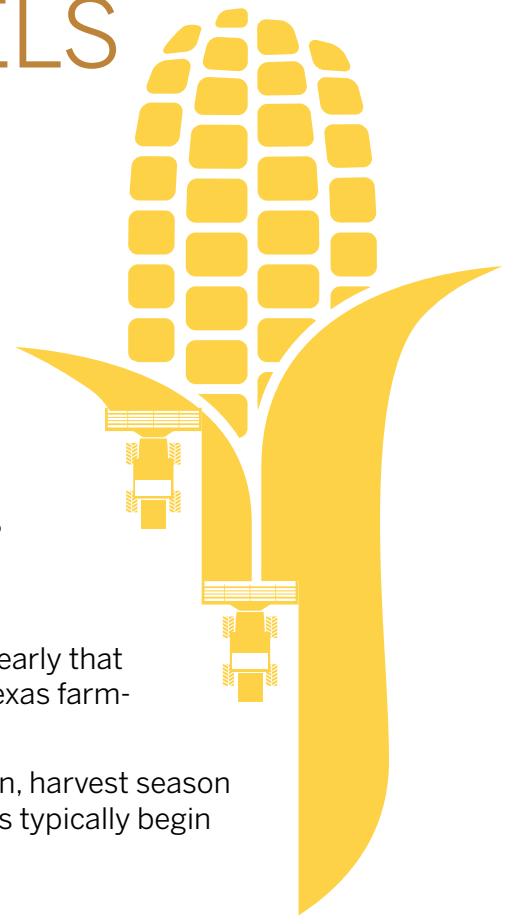
Texas corn farmers:

1. Plant more than **2 million acres** annually
2. Yield an average of **105 bushels** per acre
3. Averaged more than **285 million bushels** annually in the past 5 years

Planting and Harvesting Corn

Planting corn is a balance of ensuring the soil is warm enough to germinate the seeds, but not so early that the young plants risk being damaged by frost. Depending on geographical location and climate, Texas farmers typically begin planting corn as early as January and as late as June.

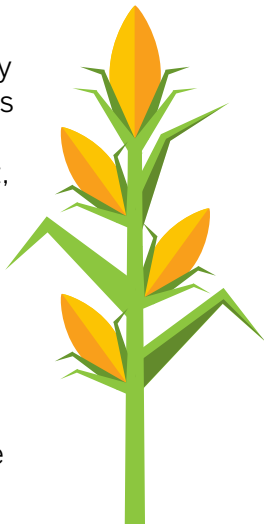
Corn typically takes about 120 days to reach maturity and be harvested. Similar to planting season, harvest season varies by region and depends on weather conditions. Depending on geographical location, farmers typically begin harvesting corn as early as July and as late as November in the state of Texas.



Corn Types

Field Corn

While driving down the highway and passing thousands of acres of corn, chances are you're seeing field corn! Field, or dent, corn is the most widely grown corn in the U.S. and makes up 99% of corn production. Field corn is harvested after the ear reaches physical maturity. Products such as livestock feed, ethanol, plastics, cornstarch and many more are made with field corn.



Sweet Corn

Sweet corn is the full-kerneled product that we all love to eat and see on the shelves of our grocery stores. This corn is harvested before it reaches physical maturity to retain the sweet flavor and juice. Out of all corn produced in the U.S., only 1% is made for human consumption.



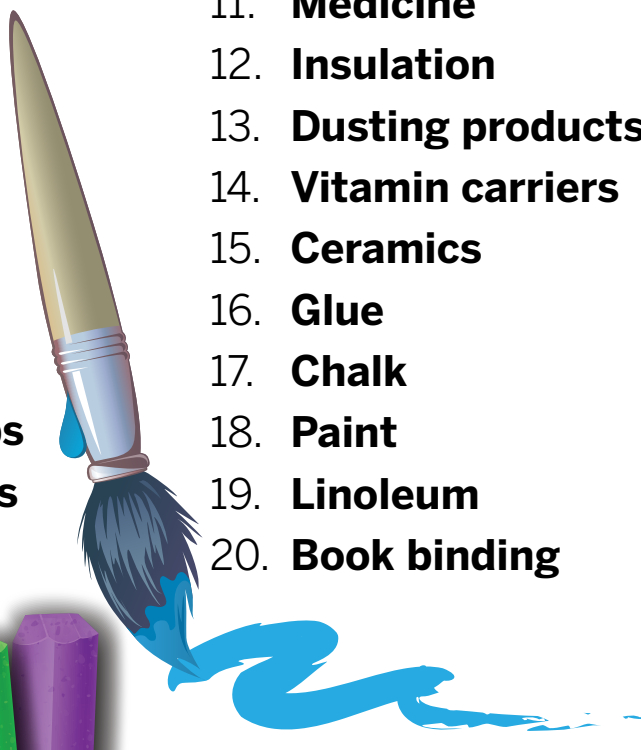
Specialty and White Corn

Specialty and white corn are typically grown for specific purposes. White corn contains higher levels of starch, which make it perfect to be used in corn chips, tortillas and other popular food products. Other types of specialty corn include: high-starch corn, high-oil corn, waxy corn, and high-lysine corn—all of which are designed for certain uses.

The many uses of corn

There are more than 4,200 uses for corn! Corn may be in your crayons, clothes, medicine or even your carpet.

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Fireworks | 11. Medicine |
| 2. Hand soap | 12. Insulation |
| 3. Carpet | 13. Dusting products |
| 4. Wallpaper | 14. Vitamin carriers |
| 5. Nail polish | 15. Ceramics |
| 6. Cosmetics | 16. Glue |
| 7. Bandages | 17. Chalk |
| 8. Cough syrups | 18. Paint |
| 9. Disinfectants | 19. Linoleum |
| 10. Antibiotics | 20. Book binding |



One bushel of corn can make

- 38 boxes** of cereal
- 258 six-packs** of soda
- 33 lbs.** of sweetener
- 2.8 gallons** of ethanol
- 17.5 lbs.** of dried distillers grains



Family celebrates historic win at Fort Worth Stock Show

**By Jennifer Dorsett
Field Editor**

On Valentine's Day in 2019, Texas Farm Bureau member Ryder Day and his family selected a Hereford calf to bring in from the pasture as Ryder's steer project for the upcoming 2020 stock show season.

"It was Valentine's Day, so we named him Cupid. Then, whenever we were working with him, he'd sort of move or shuffle around, so we started calling him Cupid Shuffle," Ryder said.

In late January 2020, Cupid Shuffle was named grand champion steer in the junior show at the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo.

"It was the first time in a long time a Hereford won, but it was the first time ever a polled [non-horned] Hereford ever won. So, it was really special to me and my family," Ryder said.

It was a special moment, in part, because the Day family bred and raised the animal.

"We're multi-generational cattle raisers on both sides of Ryder's family," his mom, Katie Jo, said. "We're really proud of our show cattle herds and our Hereford herd, in particular. And God has had this plan in motion for years now. We can't even wrap our minds around His plan. Looking back, it all makes sense."

It began with Ryder's dad, Rusty, after he was reserve grand champion at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo in 1991. Rusty used a portion of the winnings to invest in a group of cows, which were the foundation herd for what is now Day Show Cattle.

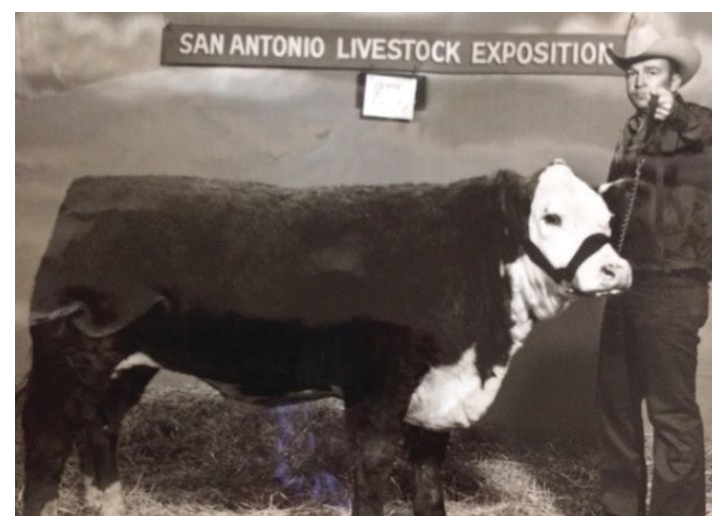
And Katie Jo's granddad, Sammy Yates, was one of the pioneers of Texas livestock shows.

It's taken generations of dedication and hard work to get from where his parents started to Cupid Shuffle, the steer Ryder exhibited in Fort Worth.

"A lot goes into it. We've been taking care of this calf since before he was born—father, mother, grandmother, all the other cattle. It doesn't come easy," Ryder said.

When the judge slapped Cupid Shuffle on the rump, signaling he was the grand champion winner, Ryder was in disbelief.

"I thought when we came into the grand drive that I had a good chance at reserve [grand champion], but I never thought I would've actually won it," he said. "Really, I was just happy to be out there and thinking this was special and probably the only time that this will ever



Ryder Day's great-grandfather, Sammy Yates, at the San Antonio Stock Show Exposition.

happen to me.”

Katie Jo couldn't stop smiling.

“I think I know how the Grinch felt when his heart grew 10 times that day,” she said. “I just had so much in my heart and mind...the pride for my husband and father-in-law for all the hard work they put in 365 days a year. Raising cattle is a job. I was so proud for Ryder, but I caught myself looking at Rusty as much as I was looking at Ryder in those moments.”

And while she wanted Ryder to enjoy his success, she reminded him it wasn't just about this one moment and one calf.

“I told Ryder before we even went to the show ring on Friday there are so many people who have put all the money they could and all the time they could into being in that ring,” she said. “But many of them don't ever experience a win or make the sale, including your dad. He never got to do what you're about to do and that's walk out into the grand drive in Fort Worth. So, you go out there and represent all those people.”

At the Sale of Champions auction the following day, Cupid Shuffle sold for a record \$300,000.

“Nothing can even go through my mind...it's too much to think about really,” Ryder said after he walked out of the sale ring.

In true big brother fashion, he said he was going to split the money with younger brother Riggan.

“We'll use it to pay for college first. Then, me and my brother will build a ranch just like my parents and my grandparents,” he said as Riggan repeatedly hugged him.

The couple who purchased Cupid Shuffle, Gary and Kathy Knox Buchholz, said they wanted to set a new sale record because it had been a long time since a Hereford won.

And making the moment even more special was a generational link between the two families.

In 1989, Katie Jo showed a Hereford steer at the Fort Worth Stock Show that was bred by Kathy Knox Buchholz' father, George “Tee” Knox.

“Looking back, it all makes sense,” Katie Jo said. “God works things according to His plan, and it's a blessing when we get to experience the results. Day Show Cattle's slogan is ‘Work Hard, Win Big,’ and we've been breeding cattle for a long time now. So, it was just great to see all that hard work pay off and see my son win big.”



Ryder's great-grandmother, Jane Pugh, showing a Hereford calf.



The Day family breeds and raises Hereford cattle, including the FWSSR Grand Champion steer Cupid Shuffle, shown at top as a calf and bottom at FWSSR.



Teachers can apply for TFB's Summer Ag Institute

By Jennifer Dorsett
Field Editor

Teachers can grow their knowledge of agriculture and learn to incorporate agricultural concepts in their classroom with help from Texas Farm Bureau (TFB).

The state's largest farm and ranch organization will host its annual Summer Agricultural Institute (SAI) June 1-4 in Waco at the TFB Conference and Training Center.

Teachers from across the Lone Star State get a first-hand look at agriculture through the professional development event.

"A teacher can go to a professional development workshop and sit in front of folks who are lecturing and presenting

slideshows, but we actually take them out into the field to see how farms and ranches operate," TFB Director of Educational Outreach Jordan Walker said. "They also learn how those disciplines relate to science, social studies, math and more."

Regardless of the subject, agriculture has a place in the classroom, Walker noted.

"The program gives teachers the tools to help students explore every part of Texas agriculture," she said. "Teachers can ask questions and get more information to be better equipped to bring agriculture to life in their classroom."

Teachers get to see the agricultural concepts demonstrated by educational professionals through SAI. They'll also make connections with farmers, ranchers and industry professionals.

And there will be several opportunities for teachers to get their hands dirty.

"It's wonderful because our

teachers get hands-on, in-the-field experience," Walker said. "They can take that back to their students fully understanding the concept, because they've seen it in action. It's just a unique view into agriculture that most people don't get to see."

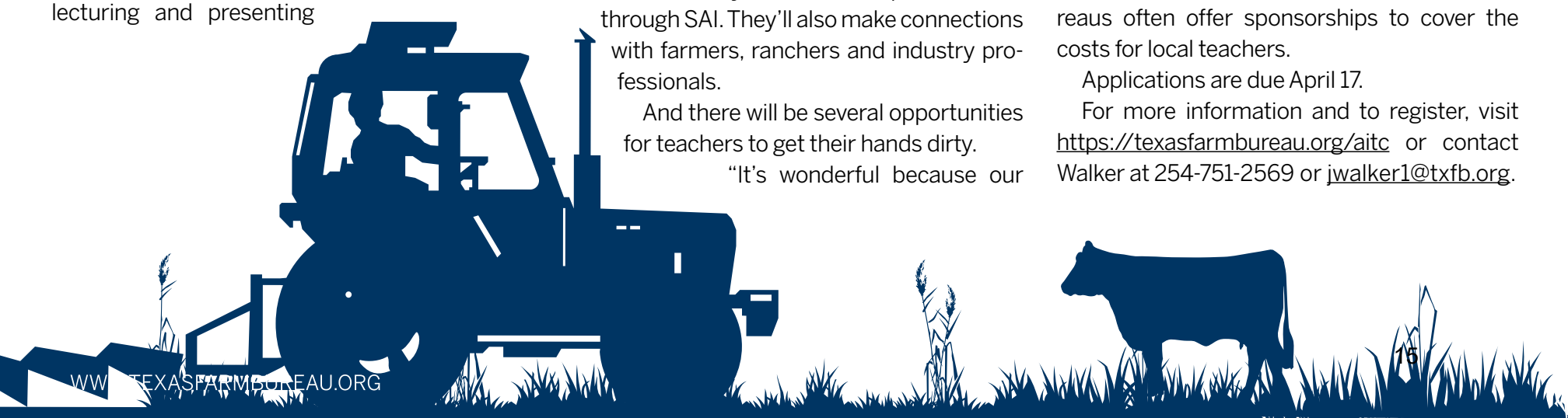
Upon completion, teachers bring home activity ideas, lesson plans and a wealth of resources. Teachers also receive 36 hours of continuing professional education credits as authorized by the Texas Education Agency.

Any active K-12 teacher of any subject can apply to attend.

The cost is \$375 per person, which includes lodging and some meals, but county Farm Bureaus often offer sponsorships to cover the costs for local teachers.

Applications are due April 17.

For more information and to register, visit <https://texasfarmbureau.org/aitc> or contact Walker at 254-751-2569 or jwalker1@txfb.org.



Agriculture Field Experiences

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Credits



Teachers will dig into the science of ag this summer

**By Julie Tomascik
Editor**

Texas teachers will get to the science of agriculture in Texas Farm Bureau (TFB)-hosted workshops this summer. Held across the state, the Summer Ag Academies offer teachers practical experience in agricultural-related concepts, and they can take home resources for use in their classrooms.

“The Summer Ag Academies give teachers an opportunity to learn how to incorporate agriculture through site visits, presentations from agricultural experts and access to and knowledge about available resources,” Jordan Walker, TFB director of Educational Outreach, said.

The Summer Ag Academies are one- and two-day professional development events to immerse teachers into agriculture.

There is no cost to attend the academies.

Although the Summer Ag Academies will focus on science, certified teachers of all subject areas can benefit from the material that is shared, Walker noted.

“Each event will be unique to focus on the agricultural operations in the respective ar-

reas, but there will be a good mix of crops, livestock and other agricultural topics,” she said.

For more than 20 years, TFB has hosted professional development events in the summer to help Texas teachers make the connection with agriculture through science, providing them innovative techniques to incorporate the subject in their curriculum.

“This year, in an effort to give teachers a more hands-on experience, they will take field visits to various farms and ranches,” Walker said.

The curriculum provided by TFB is aligned with Texas teaching standards to help teachers better incorporate material in the classroom.

Teachers also receive continuing educational credits in addition to the resource material.

“The Summer Ag Academies are free, provide resources and expertise for the teachers to take back to the classroom and open up networking opportunities with industry experts and fellow teachers who are interested in or already incorporating agriculture

into the classroom,” Walker said.

Additional information and registration details for the Summer Ag Academies are available online at <https://texasfarmbureau.org/aitc>.

For more information, contact Walker at jwalker1@txfb.org or 254-751-2569.

This year's
Summer Ag Academies
will be held at the following
locations:

June 18
College Station

July 15
Lubbock

June 30
Denton

July 20-21
New Braunfels

July 13-14
Fort Stockton

July 23
Tyler

Jalapeño Popper

CHEESECAKE

Delicious. Sweet. And a touch of heat.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 14.4 oz. box graham crackers**
- 6 eggs**
- 6 strips of bacon**
- 2 jalapenos seeded and diced**
- 3 lb. cream cheese softened**
- 1/2 lb. butter melted**
- 2 c. sugar divided**
- 1 c. pecans**
- 2 tbsp. lemon juice**
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract**

INSTRUCTIONS

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
- Fry bacon until crisp and remove from the pan to cool.
- Cook diced jalapeños in bacon grease until tender.
- Move them to a lined plate to cool and remove excess grease.
- Combine graham crackers, pecans, one cup of sugar and four strips of bacon in a food processor.
- Pulse the mixture until everything is broken down.
- Stir in the melted butter.
- Line the outside of a spring form pan with foil.
- Press the crust mixture to the pan sides and bottom.
- Combine the cream cheese and remaining sugar until smooth in a large mixer.
- Stir in the lemon juice, vanilla and eggs.
- Stir in the cooked jalapeños.
- Pour the mixture into the crust.
- Place the lined and filled pan into a larger baking dish.
- Add water to the larger dish so it comes up about half way on the pan creating a water bath.
- Bake in the bath for one hour.
- Once cooked let the cake cool completely.
- Cover and refrigerate overnight or for at least six hours.
- Before serving, top with the remaining bacon crumbles.



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FARMING: *Then and Now*



By Jennifer Dorsett
Field Editor

What was farming like 100 years ago? Brutally hard work with little reward. People ate what they grew and scratched out a living the best they could.

Today, farming and ranching is still tough work that includes early mornings, late nights and long hours in between. But thanks to advances in science and technology, agriculture has made big strides in efficiency. A farmer from 1910 who time-traveled to today would be amazed at the changes.

Farmland values have increased. In 1910, the average value per acre in Texas was \$14.53. Adjusted for inflation, that's \$391.76 in today's dollars.

What a deal! Land today sells for an average of \$2,280 in the Lone Star State.

And horsepower had a different meaning then. Although engine-powered tractors were available in the early 1900s, they were too expensive for most farmers. The use of draft horses or oxen remained a popular choice until 1945, when tractors finally outpaced horse power on American farms.

In 1910, it took about 40-50 hours of labor to produce 100 bushels of wheat on five acres.

Since the average Texas farm was 269 acres, that means a Texas wheat farmer would have to put in at least 2,100 hours

of labor to make around 5,380 bushels of wheat.

Now, farmers can achieve yields of more than 50 bushels per acre and can grow 100 bushels of wheat in only three hours of labor. That same 269-acre farm might produce 13,450 bushels of wheat today.

That's two-and-a-half times what a farmer could grow in 1910!

Back then, one farmer could grow enough food to feed around 10 people. Today, one farmer can feed about 165 people. Now, that's what you call efficient!

Developments in soil science, plant breeding, insecticide and herbicide manufacturing, GPS and so many more disciplines help today's farmers and ranchers do more with less.

But knowing or being related to a farmer was more common a century ago. Farmers made up 31 percent of the workforce in the early 1900s. Today, less than 2 percent of the U.S. population are farmers.

Some long for the good old days of farming 30 acres and a mule. That's all well and good. But modern agriculture is more productive and efficient.

American farmers are growing more with less. And I look forward to the good days still to come and of the great things our farmers and ranchers will continue to do.

In 1910, one farm could feed **10 people.**

Today, **one** U.S. farm feeds **166 people.**

In the early 1900s, **31%** of the population were **farmers.**

Today, less than **2%** are **farmers.**

Today's farmers produce **270% more food** with fewer inputs compared to 1950.



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- tolbert



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Panhandle teacher grows agricultural literacy

A Moore County teacher who has won multiple awards for her dedication to agricultural literacy and education has done it again.

Lori Garrett, the recipient of the 2017 Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) Ag in the Classroom Outstanding Teacher award, was recently presented with a White-Reinhardt Mini-Grant from the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture.

"I'm thrilled," Garrett said recently in an interview with the Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network. "[This grant] gives me the opportunity to pass information on to kids who might not ever see or might not make a connection with agriculture unless we have a hands-on opportunity."

Garrett, who teaches pre-kindergarten through fourth grade at Cactus Elementary School in Dumas, has been an active participant in many of TFB's educator opportunities, including TFB's Ag in the Classroom, Summer Ag Institute and Learning from the Ground Up

garden grant programs.

"Lori is an outstanding advocate for agricultural literacy, and she goes above and beyond to teach her students about agriculture and how it relates to their daily lives," Jordan Walker, TFB director of Educational Outreach, said. "Lori's dedication to her students, science and agricultural literacy are evident in every conversation I've ever had with her. It's an honor for a Texas teacher to receive this grant, because it supports the efforts of our teachers to continue telling agriculture's story in the classroom."

This is the second year Garrett has received a White-Reinhardt Mini-Grant.

She plans to use funds from the grant to expand the school garden program that she has supervised for the past five years.

Garrett and her students have incorporated produce grown in the garden into food packages delivered through a community outreach program. The recipients

are enthusiastic about receiving fresh produce instead of solely canned and packaged goods, according to Garrett.

In addition to the grant funds, a new partnership between the school and Cactus Nazarene Church will provide greater reach and additional resources.

"We're going to install mini aquaponics systems in our lab to grow herbs," she said. "We plan to buy some automatic watering systems for our outdoor raised beds because, being in the Texas Panhandle, one of the biggest things that we deal with is lack of moisture. So, the kids are helping me measure and calculate what we need to put those systems in, and they'll be helping to install



those and also utilizing our greenhouse more."

And as agricultural literacy continues to grow in the classrooms of Dumas ISD, so do Garrett's plans.

"The horizons keep expanding, and I keep finding more and more opportunities to implement agriculture in our school," she said. "It's been fun for me. It's great for the kids and hopefully fun for them, too."

Book aims to help children learn about agriculture

The American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture presented its 13th "Book of the Year" award to Peggy Thomas for *Full of Beans: Henry Ford Grows a Car*. The book describes Henry Ford's drive to incorporate soybeans into every part of his life.

After the Great Depression, the famous carmaker and businessman wanted to support farmers.

Researching ways to use farmers' crops at his Ford Motor Company, Ford and his team discovered that the soybean was the perfect answer. Soon, Ford's cars contained many soybean plastic parts.

His commitment to soybean farmers didn't stop there though. Ford not only ate soybeans, he wore clothes made of soybean fabric, as well.

Thomas lives with her husband and two children in Middleport, New York. She is the award-winning author of several non-fiction and fiction books for children, including *Thomas Jefferson Grows a Nation* and *Farmer George Plants a Nation*.

"It's a great honor to have *Full of Beans* recognized by the Foundation. This book has come full circle from an idea shared with me at an agricultural conference five years ago to this award," Thomas said. "Writing about our agricultural history has truly been a privilege. It is an important part of American history, and without the Foundation's continued advocacy in children's literature, publishers would not be aware of the need for these stories, and children would not read

them. For that, I am forever grateful."

The Book of the Year award springs from the Foundation's effort to identify "Accurate Ag Books," a collection of nearly 500 books for children, teenagers and adults that accurately cover agricultural topics.

Book of the Year selections are educational, help to create positive public perceptions about agriculture, inspire readers to learn more and touch their readers' lives as well as tell the farmer's story. [Click here to access the Accurate Ag Books database.](#)

To accompany *Full of Beans*, the



Foundation has created an educator's guide.

In honor of Thomas' award and Austin, the host city of the American Farm Bureau Federation's 101st Annual Convention, the Foundation donated 100 books and a \$1,000 agricultural literacy grant to the Austin Public Library.

Texas farmers, ranchers focus on sustainability

Farmers and ranchers have a strong story to tell regarding sustainability and climate-friendly practices, according to Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) President Russell Boening.

“Agriculture is part of the foundation of sustainability,” he said. “We are producing 270 percent more with the same amount of inputs compared to 50 years ago. That’s all tied to innovative practices and efforts farmers and ranchers have implemented.”

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. agriculture combined accounts for only 9 percent of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. Other sectors—including commercial and residential, industry, transportation and electricity—make up the remaining 91 percent of emissions in the U.S.

Texas farmers and ranchers implement sustainable practices in many ways, helping to minimize their impact on the environment.

“Farmers and ranchers have embraced and implemented innovative technologies that reduce emissions and increase efficiency. Agriculture is eager to be part of the solution,” Boening said. “As farmers, we play a leading role in promoting soil health, enhancing wildlife habitat and conserving water and natural resources as we grow our crops and raise livestock.”

Boening noted farmers are leading the way by reducing their relatively small footprint through

management practices that sequester carbon dioxide, such as no-till farming, planting cover crops and other practices that trap excess carbon.

It’s important, Boening said, for farmers and ranchers to be part of the sustainability conversation.

“We care for the land, livestock and wildlife. We care about our natural resources, and we want to pass our farms and ranches on to the next generation,” he said. “To keep modern agriculture sustainable, we have to make a living. But when growing food gets political, it gets tough. We need to continue unleashing innovations through agricultural research, while also making sure policy isn’t enacted that would harm agriculture.”

Texas farmers and ranchers work to be environmentally and economically sustainable. Agricultural research and voluntary stewardship investments and practices, some of which are outlined in the farm bill, have helped farmers strengthen their stewardship efforts.

To share and promote agriculture’s sustainable practices, the American Farm Bureau Federation, along with other agricultural organizations, created a coalition—Farmers for a Sustainable Future. The coalition aims to provide a voice for farmers and ranchers in the discussion about climate-smart farming and climate policy.



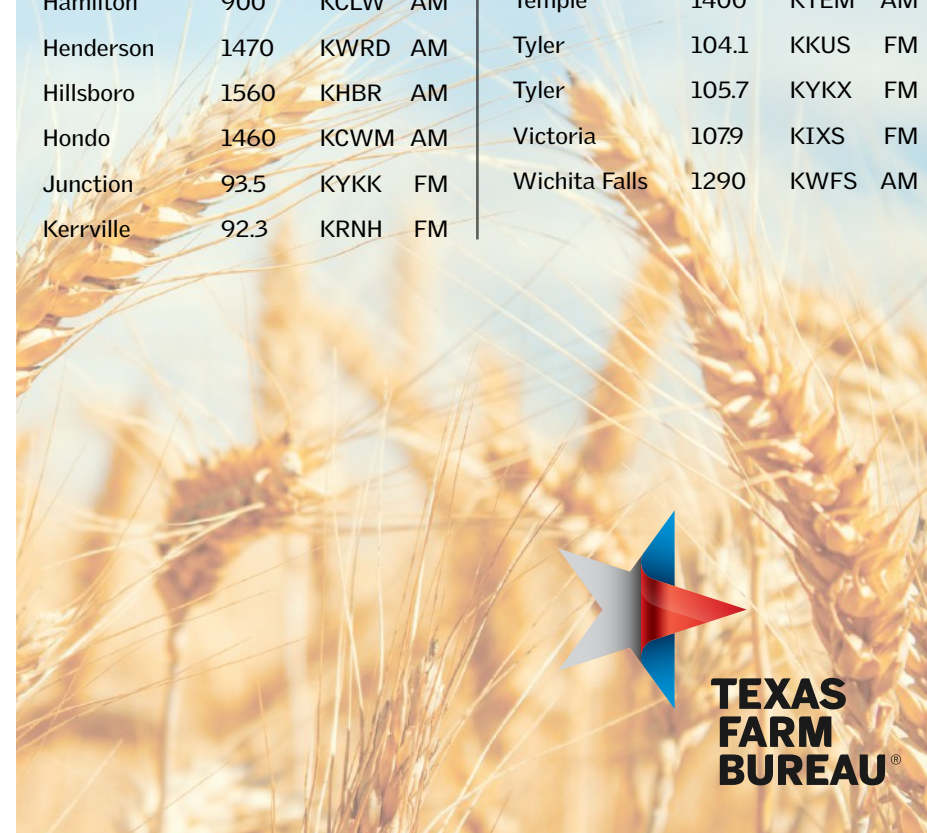
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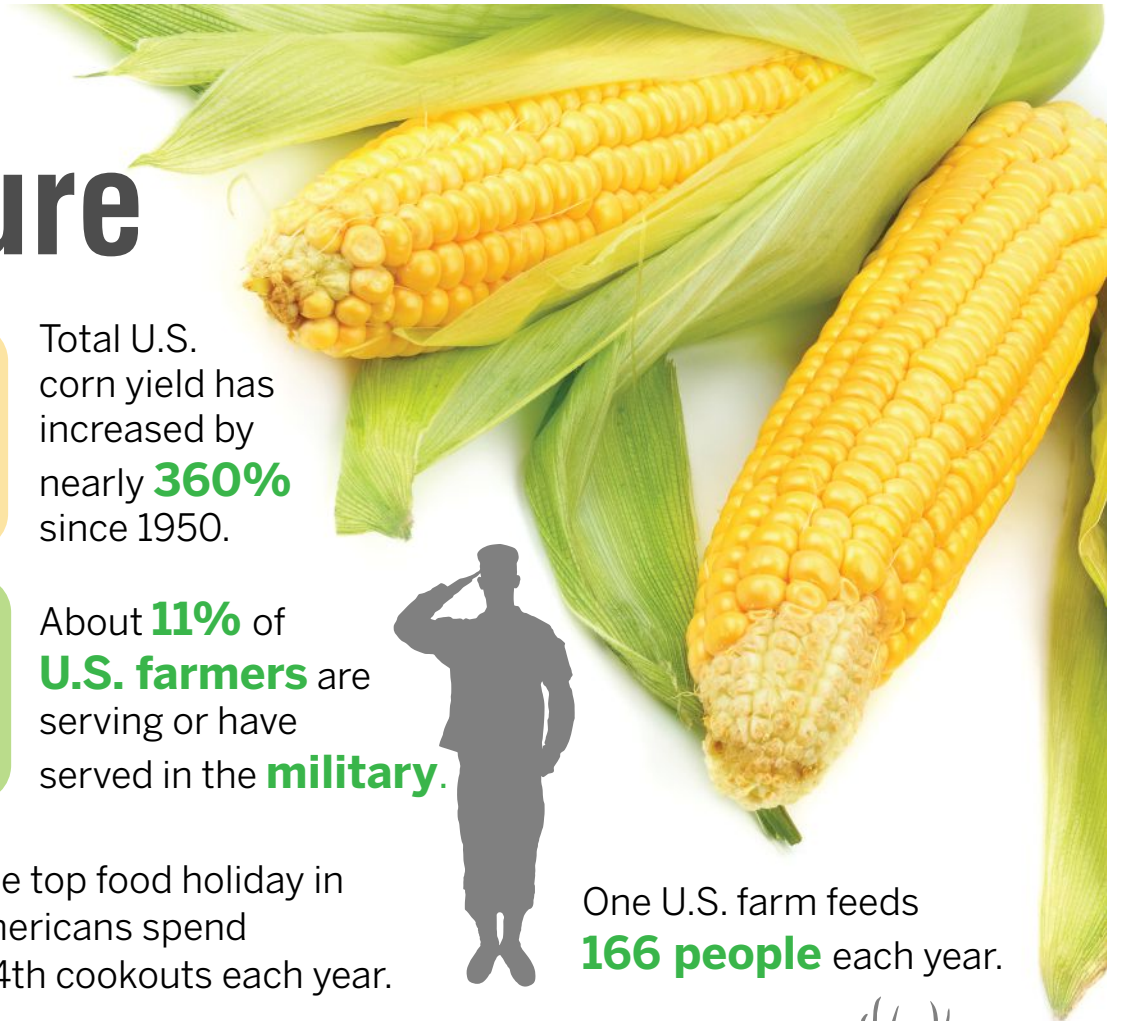
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Farmer Radio Listening Study for all Texas counties surveyed.

City	Frequency	Call Letters	City	Frequency	Call Letters
Abilene	1280	KSLI AM	La Grange	104.9	KBUK FM
Ballinger	1400	KRUN AM	La Grange	1570	KVLG AM
Big Spring	1490	KBST AM	Lamesa	690	KPET AM
Big Spring	95.7	KBST FM	Lampasas	101.9	KACQ FM
Cameron	105.1	KMIL FM	Lampasas	1450	KCYL AM
Canton	1510	KWJB AM	Madisonville	1220	KMVL AM
Carthage	1590	KGAS AM	Madisonville	100.5	KMVL FM
Carthage	104.3	KGAS FM	Marshall	103.9	KMHT FM
Center	930	KDET AM	Marshall	1450	KMHT AM
Childress	96.1	KCTX FM	Mason	102.5	KHLB FM
Comanche	1550	KCOM AM	Paris	93.9	KOYN FM
Comanche	94.3	KYOX FM	Perryton	1400	KEYE AM
Corpus Christi	1360	KKTX AM	Post	107.3	KSSL FM
Corpus Christi	99.1	KRYS FM	Quanah	1150	KOLJ AM
Corsicana	1340	KAND AM	Ranger	98.5	KWBY FM
Crockett	1290	KIVY AM	Rockdale	98.5	KRXT FM
Crockett	92.7	KIVY FM	San Angelo	960	KGKL AM
Dalhart	1240	KXIT AM	San Antonio	680	KKYX AM
Dalhart	94.5	KXIT FM	San Augustine	92.5	KDET FM
Dimmitt	100.5	KNNK FM	Seguin	1580	KWED AM
Eastland	97.7	KATX FM	Seymour	1230	KSEY AM
El Campo	1390	KULP AM	Seymour	94.3	KSEY FM
El Campo	106.7	KULP FM	Sulphur Springs	1230	KSST AM
Greenville	1400	KGVL AM	Sweetwater	1240	KXOX AM
Greenville	93.5	KIKT FM	Sweetwater	96.7	KXOX FM
Hamilton	900	KCLW AM	Temple	1400	KTEM AM
Henderson	1470	KWRD AM	Tyler	104.1	KKUS FM
Hillsboro	1560	KHBR AM	Tyler	105.7	KYKX FM
Hondo	1460	KCWM AM	Victoria	107.9	KIXS FM
Junction	93.5	KYKK FM	Wichita Falls	1290	KWFS AM
Kerrville	92.3	KRNH FM			



Fast Facts about U.S. Agriculture



America's farmers produce about **965 billion pounds** of grain, including corn, wheat, oats, rice, barley, rye and sorghum, each year.

Total U.S. corn yield has increased by nearly **360%** since 1950.

25% of all farmers are **beginning farmers** (in business less than 10 years). Their average age is 46.

About **11%** of **U.S. farmers** are serving or have served in the **military**.



One U.S. farm feeds **166 people** each year.



Independence Day is the top food holiday in the U.S. On this day, Americans spend **\$6.9 billion** on July 4th cookouts each year.

Americans throw away an estimated **25% of the food** they bring home every month.



In 2018, **\$139.6 billion** worth of American agricultural products were exported around the world. The United States **sells more food and fiber to world markets** than we import, creating a positive agricultural trade balance.

More than half of **America's farmers** intentionally **provide habitat** for wildlife.



Deer, moose, fowl and other species have shown significant population increases for decades.

Cattle and calves, corn, and **soybeans** are the **top 3** U.S. farm products.

Many Americans celebrate holidays with food, spending a total of nearly **\$14 billion** each year.

One day's production for a high-producing dairy cow yields **4.8 pounds** of butter or **8.7 gallons** of ice cream or **10.5 pounds** of cheese.

Women make up **36%** of the total number of U.S. farm operators, and **56%** of all farms have at least one female decision-maker.





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- Class 3 Galvanized
- Hi-Tensile 12.5 Gauge wire
- 20 Year Manufacturers Warranty





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HAWKINS FFA

apiary business creates national buzz



**By Jennifer Dorsett
Field Editor**

The all-female FFA ag mechanics team at Hawkins High School is savoring sweet success after winning reserve champion in showmanship at the 2019 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, as well as being featured on NBC's *Today Show*.

Their successful beekeeping and honey production business grew from a creative partnership with a national company.

A bee problem

Nestlé Waters North America's Ozarka® bottling facility located just outside of Hawkins had a bee problem. Bees were swarming near the loading docks on the nearly 3,000-acre property.

Their solution? Working with Hawkins FFA to relocate the bees and provide a learning opportunity for students.

"Nestlé is always looking for ways to create shared value with partners in the community," Cher-

yl Conway, quality assurance manager, said. "We sponsor scholarships, all kinds of things, and this was a perfect partnership with Hawkins High School."

Byrd and the queen bees

When Hawkins agricultural science teacher Matt Byrd received a phone call from Conway explaining her idea, he recognized the unique opportunity to reach more students. He sought advice from a local beekeeper, and the project was born.

As part of the project, the students designed and built a beehive to enter in the agricultural mechanics competition at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

Nestlé provided monetary donations for shop equipment to build the boxes and purchased protective suits and beekeeping equipment for the girls.

With that, the 4G Honey Team was established.

Brook Goddard, Jessica Hennes, Rachel Parish and Mack-

enzie Rutherford were the four students on the team. They constructed new homes for the itinerant colony, hoping to get at least one constructed in time for the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Junior Agricultural Mechanics contest.

Their hive design was submitted to the livestock handling equipment division, where the girls competed against teams who had built equipment like squeeze chutes, gates, panels, feeders and other more traditional livestock handling equipment.

Building the boxes was an educational experience.

"It's a lot of trial and error, especially with Eastern red cedar. It's a very soft wood, and the knots in it makes it crack easily," Goddard, a junior at Hawkins High, said.

The Eastern red cedar lumber makes ideal beehives, because it has some inherent moth- and mite-repellant properties, Goddard explained. But some of the girls had never even held a power tool or tried to build something from wood before.

The girls persevered, and soon established an apiary on the Nestlé property.

Their plan worked. The bees vacated the plant and moved into the students' beehives.

The students, now novice beekeepers, continued to care for the colonies, learning from a local beekeeper about the basics of honey production.

And then it was time for the Houston Stock Show.

The taste of sweet success

Despite the abundance of large-scale cattle handling pieces on display, Byrd knew the 4G Honey Team would still create some buzz.

"They have a showmanship division, and in showmanship, it's based on how well the students know their project," he said. "It's judged on how well they've got the bill of materials down, their project design and how well it's presented. It's a marathon. They're talking to people all day long. There are judges coming through all day, and they have to be on their toes at all times and really work at that angle."

Each student could explain the beehives' construction and functionality.

On the last day of the agricultural mechanics show, the awards ceremony was held. And the girls



had their first taste of sweet success when they were named reserve grand champions in the showmanship category out of 500 schools.

They won \$8,000 in prizes and equipment at the competition. After their victory, the girls planned to return to Hawkins and get back to the business of balancing schoolwork, tending bees and collecting honey.

But the word was out about their unique project.

In the spotlight

Today Show producers visited Hawkins and produced an initial segment. They returned in early December to report live from the Hawkins High School gym.

“I think that was a highlight for our community and school district to be put in the spotlight, to have everyone here early that morning supporting our girls and our program,” Byrd said.

The Nestlé leadership team provided \$5,000 scholarships for each of the girls, as well as a \$10,000 grant to Hawkins FFA to help continue and grow the project.

The Texas Department of Agriculture also presented the students with certificates of achievement recognizing their contributions to Texas agriculture.

The *Tyler Morning Telegraph* extensively documented the girls’ journey, and the students have since presented to many local groups, gaining confidence and skills along the way.

Harvesting the rewards

Byrd knew his students would succeed. And while he’s proud of their achievement at the show, he’s even more proud of their char-

acter development and growth.

The girls say they owe it all to FFA.

“FFA is a very diverse organization,” Henneous said. “Not very many people get the chance to be able to get a huge sponsorship like we have and build a bee apiary, but it’s been a lot of fun and it’s a really great experience.”

FFA teaches youth about more than just agriculture, Parish noted, and the lessons she’s learned will carry her far.

“I would say before I was brought into FFA and introduced to this project, I was more on the quiet side of things,” Parish said. “But after this project, I’ve opened up a little bit. We’ve done a lot of presentations and interviews that have definitely helped with our leadership skills and speaking ability.”

Entrepreneurship, time management, leadership and teamwork are some of the skills Rutherford said she gained from the experience.

“We didn’t just learn beekeeping. We learned how to take care of a kitchen, because the kitchen is our honey headquarters,” Rutherford said. “In the kitchen, we learned how to run a company, balance school and be beekeepers.”

They couldn’t have done it without their teacher, the girls noted.

“Mr. Byrd has been outstanding,” Goddard said. “He’s led us through everything, and he’s the reason we’re where we’re at today. He’s given us a lot of confidence and really helped us a lot.”

It’s been a sweet success led by an un-bee-lievable partnership between a national company and a youth organization.



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Washington on the Brazos

the birthplace of Texas



**By Jennifer Dorsett
Field Editor**

On March 1, 1836, a group of Texians were under siege at a mission in San Antonio, fighting bravely to retain control of the fort.

Meanwhile, 167 miles away, another group of Texians were gathered in the small town of Washington, huddled inside a small, unfinished wooden building along the banks of the Brazos River. The 59 men there, weary of the centralist Mexican government's infringement upon their citizenship rights, fought not by gun, but by pen.

After the Convention of 1836 was called to order, the president of the convention appointed a committee to draft a document formally declaring independence from Mexican rule. The next day, the Texas Declaration of Independence was presented to the rest of the delegates, and with their

signatures, the Republic of Texas was born.

Sadly, the town of Washington didn't withstand the tests of time. Railroads were built, bypassing the once bustling riverport, and the town gradually receded into the annals of history.

Today, Washington on the Brazos is a State of Texas Historic Site overseen by the Texas Historical Commission.

"Texans are proud of our heritage and the place we call home. We're very, very proud to be able to protect the place where Texas was born," Jon Failor, complex manager of Washington on the Brazos State Historic Site, said. "This is a place that not only changed Texas but changed the United States and the world."

Located on 293 acres, the site gives visitors a chance to experience Texas through the lens of the late 1800s. Independence

Hall, Barrington Plantation, the Star of the Republic Museum and an informative visitor center offer a look at what life was like for the people fighting to establish Texas as a nation and eventually, the 28th state.

But what really makes Washington on the Brazos unique is the way the information is presented: through living history and the use of interpreters.

"An interpreter is the bridge between the museum visitor or the living history visitor and the story that the site is sharing," Failor said. "We interpret the language of the past."

Every third Saturday of the month, the historical site has "Living History Saturday." Formal guided tours of Independence Hall are suspended, and staff and volunteers don period clothing of the 1830s, bringing the hall to life and talking about different as-

pects of the town in the Texas Republic period.

Over at Barrington Plantation, formerly the Barrington Living History Farm, it's always set in the past.

"Barrington farm is the home of Dr. Anson Jones, the last president of the Republic of Texas," Failor said. "He named it Barrington because that's where he was from: Great Barrington, Massachusetts. It's not just a historic site where you tour a historic house. What we try to do there is recreate day-to-day life as best we can, based on his personal writings, journals and farm records and really give people a glimpse into 19th Century Texas. The history of Texas is agriculture, so it's a unique opportunity for visitors to come see and engage with staff dressed in period clothing and carrying out living history activities."

Agriculture was the basis of the

new republic's economy. Cotton and corn were the two most significant crops grown during the early republic and statehood periods.

"A lot of times today, people are so separated from their agricultural history, but you and I, we descended from farmers," he said. "We may not work as farmers today, but farming is in our heritage, and what we believe at Barrington farm is that it's really important to continue to connect people back to those farming roots."

Interpreters are fully immersed in daily life on a farm in the 1850s. They grow cotton, corn and other crops using only the cultivation methods available at that time. Draft animals are used for plowing and hauling materials.

"We always like to say, if you live here and you work here, you're going to have to provide something for the farm," Failor said. "We raise piglets, and those piglets are used for our butchering demonstration programs because that was their role on the farm. Chickens give us eggs and meat. Draft animals give us work. And we know that historically, once an ox reached about

the age of 10 and passed serviceable working years, they became table food, because they could serve the family far beyond their years in the field. So that's what we do here."

Working on the grounds is an experience like no other.

"It's a little bit different to wear an atypical uniform," Ben Baumgartner, lead agricultural interpreter at Barrington Plantation, said. "In the summer, I walk outside with long trousers, a long-sleeve linen shirt, a waistcoat, a neck kerchief and a summer coat. Not only am I trying to recreate the image that you would see, but it also gives you a chance to talk about why they wore those things. Socially, we know people wore more clothes, but also functionally. This was before sunscreen and things like that. So, I'm wearing long sleeves and broad-brimmed hats to keep the sun off in the summertime but also to protect my arms, my legs from the brush going through working in the fields."

While Baumgartner oversees the fields, animals, fencing and various outbuildings of the prop-

erty, Barb King is the lead domestic interpreter. She is responsible for recreating the daily life of a household in that era, which typically included larger families.

"Dr. Anson Jones lived here with his wife, their four children, their four adopted children and his sister, so that's 11 people," King said. "Our houses have gotten bigger, and our families have gotten smaller. The idea of privacy is just an entirely different thing between 1850 and today."

King and other interpreters perform a variety of everyday household tasks, such as caring for the chickens and vegetable garden, keeping house, smoking and curing meat, canning and preserving vegetables, making clothing and more.

On weekends, they focus on specific tasks relevant to the season. On a fall weekend, visitors may see King and others dipping candles for the upcoming winter or using dried corn husks from the harvest to make rudimentary brooms. Spring and summer bring many opportunities for preserving vegetables and fruit in preparation for the leaner win-

ter months, when fresh produce wasn't readily available.

"I love teaching history to people and making it relevant. Especially with kids, when they learn a lot of history, they don't learn it in a way that it really sticks with them," she said. "But when you come out to a site like this, we hope we give them tactile memories, as well, because they'll smell the smoke. They'll hear the animals. They'll see a very different view than what they see at home today."

There's something for everyone at Washington on the Brazos. Failor said it holds a special place in the heart of Texans.

"Washington on the Brazos is the site where the world changed forever," Failor said. "There are only two places in this whole country that you can stand and say, 'Here, a nation was born.' One of them is in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and the other one is in Washington, Texas."

For more information on Washington on the Brazos Historical Site, visit <http://wheretexasbecametexas.org/>.



★ | MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR

RISING ABOVE

Baldree uses farm work ethic on Texas A&M's football team



**By Jennifer Dorsett
Field Editor**

It's an early spring morning in rural East Texas. The grass is green, the birds are singing, and the overcast sky promises rain. Cagan Baldree stands on the back porch, surveying the rolling pasture and pine trees beyond.

"The property we're on is where I was raised. My family roots run very, very deep right here in this

spot," he said.

Cagan's dad, Cody, was raised in the same house. Cagan's grandmother still lives on the property a short half mile away.

Cody transitioned out of the dairy business into growing hay and raising beef cattle in the early '90s. He married Shannon Pennington in 1996, and together they had Cagan, Callahan and Caroline.

Cagan has fond memories of

helping his dad and playing with his siblings on the farm.

"We did everything together—just riding around with my dad, feeding the dogs, feeding the cattle, riding on the tractor with him while he cut hay," he said. "And we still had the dairy barn up here. It wasn't in use, but me and my brother loved to go play in there because there was so much to climb on and check out. We were

always fishing and hunting on the back of the place."

Although life as a farm kid was busy, there was time for sports, too. Cody coached Cagan's and Callahan's baseball teams throughout their childhood, and he taught his kids to approach sports the same way they approached tasks on the farm.

"He instilled in us what is most important, like why it's important

to take care of your own stuff, and to take responsibility for what you've been blessed with," Cagan said.

In 2008, when Cagan was 10 years old, the family found out Cody had leukemia.

A two-year battle followed. Cagan's dad would go into remission only to have the cancer come back in another area.

In 2010, things seemed better. But then they received another devastating blow.

Cody had a cancerous mass on the lining of his brain, a particularly difficult area to treat. As a result of an invasive chemotherapy treatment, he became paralyzed from the waist down and lost the use of his legs.

"Cody went from being my kids' hero and just this larger-than-life personality to in a wheelchair almost overnight," Shannon said. "But Cagan became his daddy's legs. He did the things Cody couldn't do, like hooking up the tractor, helping him get in and out of it. He took on so much responsibility at such a young age."

The situation weighed on Cagan sometimes, but he would gladly do whatever it took to help his dad.

"He was able to teach me about shouldering a little bit more of the load or taking a little bit more responsibility for the things that are going on with the family," Cagan said.

Cody lost his fight with leukemia in 2014, but not before watching Cagan and the rest of the Carthage Bulldogs take home the Texas 3A Division 1 high school football championship in December 2013.

"It was definitely God's timing that the last football game of mine he saw was that one," Cagan said. "I remember it wasn't something he necessarily liked or wanted, but because he was in his wheelchair at the time, he got really good seats because of where he was supposed to sit. I remember looking up to him in the crowd throughout the game and after the game. Being able to see him right there close was special."

After Cody passed away, Cagan pitched in around the house, worked on the property and chauf-



Cagan with his dad, Cody, after one of his high school football games before his dad passed away. Photo courtesy of the Baldree family.



Cagan Baldree is Texas A&M University's starting fullback. Photo courtesy of Texas A&M Athletics.

feured his younger brother and sister to after-school activities, all while maintaining his own academic and athletic schedule.

"At that point, Cagan truly became the man of the house," Shannon said. "He just stepped up and he was really a godsend to me. I couldn't have gotten through it without him."

When Cagan graduated high school in 2016 as salutatorian of his class, he was at a crossroads.

He had always loved baseball, but football seemed a better fit for the 6'4" athlete. There were football scholarship offers on the table from smaller schools, but Cagan's dream was to attend Texas A&M University.

"I told my head coach 'I'm just going to go to A&M. That's where I've always wanted to go, and because the education part of it is a lot more important to me right now, that's kind of the plan,'" Cagan said.

Cagan's coach suggested he try to walk on to the football team.

And he did. After receiving preferred walk-on status, Cagan played center and guard for three seasons. While he was happy to be at his favorite school and on the football roster, it just wasn't enough.

"When I got in, I was already undersized to begin with, so I was always constantly trying to train, eat as much as I possibly could, gain as much weight as I possibly could. But I never really could get over that threshold," Cagan said.

But that hard-earned farm kid grit and determination carried Cagan to a breakthrough.

Things began to fall into place when, in 2017, Texas A&M hired head coach Jimbo Fisher. During the 2018 season, Fisher reintroduced the position of fullback to the Aggie offensive line formation.

"A little over a year ago, I knew this is kind of the last shot of it hap-

pening," Cagan said. "I really wanted to get on the field. I knew I had worked very hard and just wanted that one shot in a position that would fit my skill set a little more."

He approached Fisher in January 2019 about playing fullback in the fall.

"The thing you don't realize about him is he can catch the football," Fisher told the *Houston Chronicle*. "He said, 'I can catch, coach,' and I said, 'All linemen say they can catch, because they want the ball.' Then we put him in there, and he can catch the ball very well."

In true Baldree fashion, Cagan trained hard and earned the position, getting leaner, faster and stronger. He played in all 12 games during the 2019 football season.

Now, set to enter his final season, Cagan is the starting fullback.

But according to Cagan, without his agricultural background, his success could have never happened.

"It goes back to the way my dad raised us, that there's a blessing in work," Cagan said. "Whatever the situation was, we'd take the same mentality, mindset, discipline, hard work and attention to detail in anything that we do—whether that be working here on the place or with sports. If you just let things go, it's not going to look like something you want to take hold of, and that's the same thing with a football career. I need to take care of my own body. I need to take care of training and making sure that I'm prepared to do what I need to do."

No matter where football or life takes him in the future, Cagan's roots are firmly planted. And they'll always bring him home again.

"My brother and my sister and I were my dad's pride and joy," Cagan said. "But this land and where our roots are set is also so foundational to who we are as a family. We'll always make sure that this place is cherished and taken care of and appreciated for what it is and what it's meant to us. It's just an amazing testament to how we've been blessed as a family to lean on each other when things are tough. God strengthened us through that. It's not always a happy story, but there's so much depth there."

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