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WINTER 2020

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Grow an understanding of food, agriculture



The New Year brings hope, opportunity



By Russell Boening
President
Texas Farm Bureau

It's a New Year. And a new decade. 2020 is officially here! Hallelujah! Sure, 2019 had its good moments. But ask just about any Texas farmer or rancher, and they'll tell you the New Year couldn't get here fast enough.

Fires. Tornadoes. Devastating storms. Flooding followed by months without rain. It was a long year, and not just for agriculture. We were all impacted by some of these same events.

Thankfully, it's a new year. A time for a new you, but you can expect the same Texas agriculture.

Year in and year out, agriculture supports our bodies and our jobs. This year won't be any different.

Did you make resolutions to get healthier or save money? Texas farmers and ranchers have just what you need.

Vegetables, grains, beef, pork, lamb and poultry. Each plays a role in our balanced and nutritious diet, and all get their start on a farm or ranch.

Heading to the gym? Grab your cotton t-shirt, and get your sweat on!

Next time you're hitting the weights or going for a run, think about the farmers who helped make your workout gear possible.

Spending less and saving more. It's a resolution we can all get behind. And yes, agriculture can help.

Farmers and ranchers grow a variety of crops, including traditional and organic foods. While organic is more expensive, traditional-grown foods are quality products at a reasonable price.

One in seven working Texans also has a job related to agriculture. Communicators, teachers, scientists, transportation, processing and more—all are tied to agriculture.

Farmers and ranchers like myself strive to get better each year, too. We work to use less fuel and fewer resources to grow more food.

Texas farmers and ranchers play a role in just about everything we do. That's not changing. So, while we begin our new diets, workout routines and money-saving strategies, farmers will continue to operate under the same goals with the same passion as before.

It's the start of a new year. But it's just another day for Texas agriculture.



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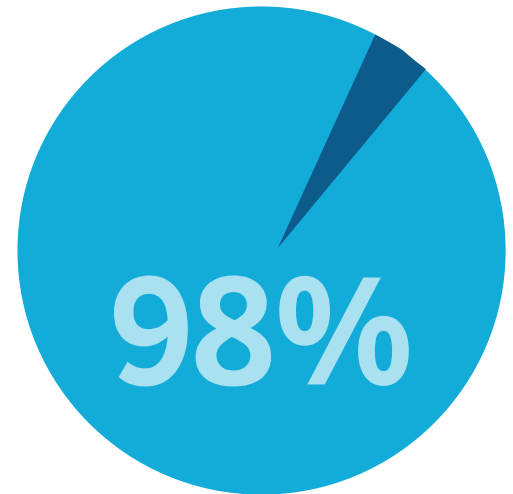
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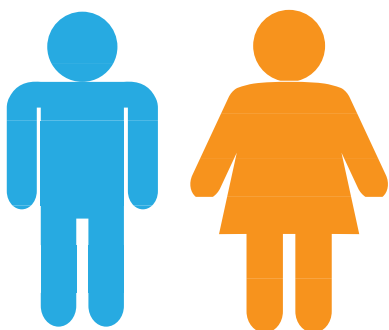
Texas farmers and ranchers grow our future

Today, **98%** of all U.S. farms are owned by individuals, family partnerships or family corporations.

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The average size of a **Texas farm** or **ranch** is **511 acres**.

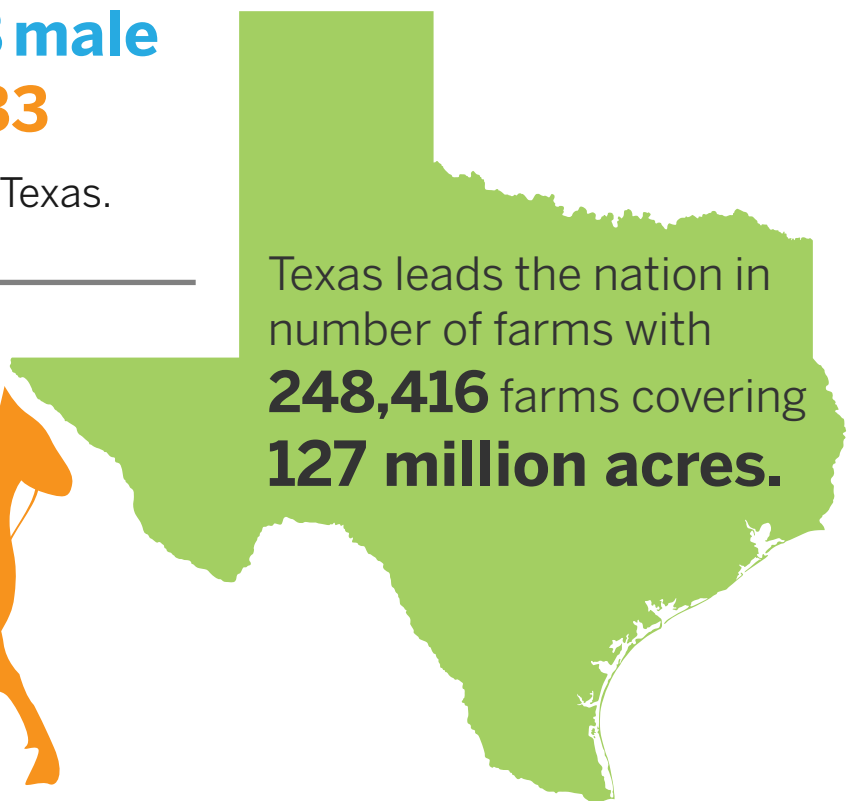


There are **252,273 male** farmers and **156,233 female** farmers in Texas.

There are **28,187** young farmers in Texas and **118,999** new and beginning farmers and ranchers.



Texas leads the nation in number of farms with **248,416** farms covering **127 million acres**.



**Source: USDA 2017 Census of Agriculture and 2018 USDA ERS America's Diverse Family Farms*

Bring ag to life in the classroom



**By Julie Tomascik
Editor**

Food and farm myths are abundant online and in the classroom, but Texas Farm Bureau's (TFB) school visit program seeks to dispel those myths by bringing agriculture to life in the classroom.

"Agriculture has a place in all classrooms and teaching styles," Jordan Walker, TFB director of Educational Outreach, said. "Through the school visits, both teachers and students are exposed to agricultural concepts that are tied to the course, whether it's reading, science or social studies."

The mobile program strives to reconnect students in kindergarten through eighth grade with the farmers and ranchers who grow their food, fiber and fuel.

Presenters, who are trained by TFB staff, are placed throughout the various regions of the state to meet the growing demand for agricultural education in classrooms.

"Agriculture is a mystery for so many students and even for the teachers," Walker said. "These school visits are part of Farm Bureau's educational outreach efforts to increase agricultural awareness and make learning about agriculture fun. The presenters are excited and engaged. They're knowledgeable about agriculture, and they can really elevate the learning experience for the students."

The program curriculum for each grade is aligned with Texas teaching standards, which helps teachers incorporate the concepts into their classrooms, Walker said.

There are four lesson plans available.

The "Planting the Seed" lesson plan connects classroom concepts to agriculture through

a science-based curriculum.

The lesson is geared toward students in second through fifth grade. Urban and rural students become farmers as they plant a seed in a cup. Throughout the remainder of the year, the students water their seeds and care for the plants, giving them a better

understanding of the care and attention farmers give their crops.

"Who Grew My Soup" is a reading and writing curriculum for second through fifth grade. It highlights who grows the different vegetables that go into their favorite soups.

A social studies lesson, "Map-

ping Out Texas Agriculture: Regions, Economics and History," shows students in second through seventh grade the diversity of the agricultural areas in the Lone Star State.

A careers lesson, "Investigating Agriculture Careers: Not Just Sows, Cows and Plows," is available for eighth graders. The lesson highlights the many possible career paths within agriculture.

The students are also able to "meet" a farmer through short videos, which show farmers who grow corn, cotton, wheat, strawberries, sesame and more.

"Each school visit allows us to bring agriculture to life for those students," Walker said. "We plant the seed of agricultural literacy during that visit. We also have additional lesson plans for teachers to help expand on those agricultural concepts to cultivate a better understanding of agriculture, as well as the subject matter they're teaching."

The program, now in its sixth year, made 571 visits and reached more than 51,100 students in 2019.

Walker hopes to connect with more students this year.

"Each school visit allows us to bring agriculture to more classrooms," she said. "We want to make sure students know how broad and diverse agriculture is, as well as how it affects them every day."

Schools can sign up for a visit at www.texasfarmbureau.org/aitc.

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





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- **90** one-pound loaves of whole wheat bread
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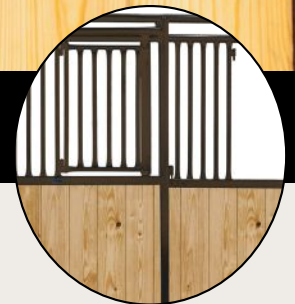
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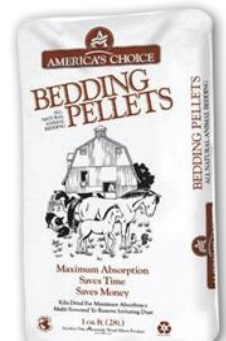
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2020 Texas Farm Bureau

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>.

Growing a love for agriculture, one classroom at a time



By Jennifer Dorsett
Field Editor

One fourth-grade teacher's efforts to plant seeds of knowledge about agriculture has her harvesting the fruits of her labor in the classroom.

Julie Wester, a teacher at Creek View Elementary in College Station, was named Texas Farm Bureau's (TFB) 2019 Agriculture in the Classroom Outstanding Teacher.

Wester graduated from Texas A&M University in 2008 with a bachelor's degree in Food Science and Technology. Surprisingly, teaching wasn't on her mind as a career avenue.

"I actually didn't always want to be a teacher," she said. "I went to Texas A&M and was interested in food science. After graduation, I worked in the field as a quality assurance technician for H-E-B, and while I enjoyed that, I more enjoyed training people and being around people. It was always just in the back of my mind, so I took a position as a math specialist assistant just to try it and see if I really enjoyed working with kids. And it became my passion and my love."

Wester obtained her teaching certification and never looked back.

She now teaches fourth grade science, math and social studies. After realizing so many of her urban students thought food comes directly from the grocery store, she started looking for ways to incorporate agriculture in her curriculum.

"Texas Farm Bureau has given me so many resources to be able to do that," she said. "In a classroom, if you start from step one, it's really hard to come up with lessons and whole units that align with the curriculum requirements on your own. But through Farm Bureau, I'm able to use lesson plans, videos produced by the organization and so many more resources to bring ag into the classroom."

Her students learn about agriculture through hands-on activities and visual lessons. They take field trips to the "Pizza Ranch" to learn about how food is grown and participate in TFB's school visit program, along with other engaging classroom activities.

When teaching students about the water cycle, she works with the Brazos County Soil and Water Conservation District to discuss agricultural water use and why farms and ranches need water. In another unit, students learn about crops, and the class works to identify renewable and non-renewable natural resources.

Nearly every classroom concept can be tied back to agriculture, according to Wester. Her passion for teaching is spurred by her students' sense of wonder and excitement when lessons come to life.

Wester was nominated by Brazos County Farm Bureau (CFB).

"Julie goes above and beyond normal classroom expectations to correlate agriculture into daily curriculum," Brazos CFB President Jared Klatt wrote in a nomination letter. "She is highly engaged in Farm Bureau teacher opportunities and incorporates multiple facets of agricultural production into her students' lessons."

She has been teaching for eight years and is the lead science teacher at Creek View Elementary.

"Julie is a wonderful example of the difference a teacher's attitude can make for students," TFB President Russell Boening said. "She teaches in an urban setting, where many kids aren't exposed to agriculture. Through her engaging teaching style, she helps children make a connection between farmers and ranchers and our food, clothes, fuel and natural resources."

In recognition of her accomplishment, Wester will receive a \$600 cash award, as well as an expense-paid trip to attend the National Agriculture in the Classroom Conference next summer. Brazos CFB will also receive a \$400 cash award for nominating Wester.

Wester will also be nominated for the National Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture award.

GROWING DREAMS IN DALHART

**By Jessica Domel
Multimedia Reporter**

A farmer's generosity, a close-knit community and hard work has led to two harvests and a wealth of opportunities for students at Dalhart Christian Academy (DCA).

Last summer, a long-time supporter of the school—who wishes to remain anonymous—donated a circle to the school to farm.

"They still own the farm. They're just letting us farm it rent-free," Julia Williams, the school's public relations director, said in an interview with the Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network.

Almost all of the inputs for the corn crop were donated by the community.

"Dalhart is a community that is rooted in agriculture. Almost everyone here is connected to agriculture in one way or another," Williams said. "Our board—we have farmers and seed dealers—convened a team of people to help farm the circle."

The school only had to pay for electricity for the irrigation on the circle.

The silage was sent to a dairy after it was harvested.

"We'll be able to use the proceeds from the crop to support the school," Williams said. "Our tuition doesn't cover the full cost to run the school. So, we fill the gap with fundraising."



The funding will be used for extra-curricular activities, the computer lab and library.

"[The students] are excited about the new opportunities we'll be able to implement because of the funding," Williams said.

The school, which was originally kindergarten through fifth grade, has recently expanded into junior high and

now offers sports.

She said there's talk of adding a high school.

And the opportunities afforded to DCA didn't stop at the school's doors, according to Williams.

The school also planted sweet corn, which was picked by the students and their families.

"We used the sweet corn to distribute to ministries here in Dalhart," Williams said. "The ones that helped pick the sweet corn and distribute it commented how special it was to be able to give forward. People donated the farm to us, and then we're able to grow the product and donate it."

In late September 2019, DCA hosted a pre-harvest celebration with a meal at

the farm to celebrate the partnership.

There was barbecue, corn grown by the school, hay rides and pumpkin bowling.

"The family that donated the farm, their kids all attended Dalhart Christian Academy. They continue to support the school and be involved and believe in its mission," Williams said. "Having had a family that sent all of

“ “ It shows they believe in education. They believe in these kids, and they believe in the future of Dalhart Christian Academy. ” ”

—Julia Williams

their kids here and having seen the work the school does, for them to step up and support the school in this way is such a vote of confidence for our mission and the work that we're doing."

Williams said it's a blessing to see the community come together to support the continued education of local students.

"It shows they believe in education. They believe in these kids, and they believe in the future of Dalhart Christian Academy," Wil-

iams said.

The farmer who donated the circle indicated if it does well, he may make a second circle available for another crop next year.

"So far it's been fantastically successful, so we're hopeful we can continue this partnership and grow it in the future," Williams said.

DCA was founded in 1997 and focuses on helping students grow academically, personally and spiritually.



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ANYWHERE WOOD ROT, CONTAMINATION, ANIMAL HEALTH, DURABILITY ARE A CONCERN

Chicken TAQUITOS

INGREDIENTS

- 1-1/2 lbs. chicken breast**
- 1 c. salsa**
- 1 pkg. cream cheese, softened**
- 2 dozen corn tortillas**
- oil for frying**

INSTRUCTIONS

- Boil chicken in salted water
- Cool and shred
- Combine with cream cheese
- Mix in salsa
- Add 2 tablespoons to the end of a corn tortilla and roll into a cigar
- Repeat until tortillas are all used
- Chill in refrigerator for 20 minutes
- Heat oil in large skillet over high heat
- Fry taquitos for about two minutes per side, or until each side is golden
- Serve warm with salsa for dipping



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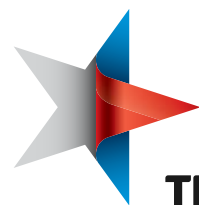
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Growing a future in agriculture



**By Jennifer Dorsett
Field Editor**

In Anderson County, pine trees and cattle are a common sight.

What's not so common? The black soil plowed into neat fields with rows of growing plants.

But the unusualness of that vision didn't deter Braden McInnis from following his dreams.

"We're in a part of the state where there's not much large-scale agricultural production," he said. "It's probably been 50 or 60 years since row crops were grown here."

Braden grew up nearby, helping his grandfather with his small cattle and hay operation. He showed cattle in FFA and met other kids who came from farms.

After spending a couple of summers helping on those farms, he was hooked.

"I was still in high school, but I went out and got a young farmer start-up loan from the government and bought some equipment. I talked a guy into renting me 80 acres of black dirt," Braden said. "And before I knew it, that 80 acres turned into 300, and by the time I was out of high school, I was farming about 500 acres."

Now, Braden is living his farm dream, along with his wife, Jordan. They grow mostly corn, with cotton, wheat, soybeans, oats and grain sorghum rotated into the mix.

In addition to row crops, the couple has a cow-calf operation, grows hay, provides commercial spray applicator services and agricultural trucking in the area, does some custom farming and has recently started clearing land.

On top of all that, Jordan is the lead agricultural science teacher at nearby Elkhart High School.

Like Braden, she didn't grow up farming. But she did own horses. From English riding and dressage, she made her way to FFA, participating in horse judging and radio contests.

She found her passion for teaching others about agriculture in college.

"Coming from a non-typical background, I had a different perspective. But I got to understand through my ag classes how agriculture is important for everyone, even if I grew up in concrete neighborhoods," Jordan said. "Now I teach agricultural science, and I'm married to a farmer."

In fact, their romance began at a Texas Farm Bureau Young Farmer & Rancher (YF&R) meeting.

"My teaching partner was the county Farm Bureau board president, and he convinced me to go to one of the YF&R events. That's where I met Braden," Jordan said.

Teaching classes like livestock production, advanced animal science, floral design and small-level management, as well as overseeing her students' show animal projects, keeps Jordan busy.

But she enjoys the chance to help on the farm whenever she gets free time. And she loves to share that experience with her students.

"We host a youth harvest experience every year, showing local students all the aspects of farming," she said. "We talk about farming in class, but they don't really understand the true scope of it until they see it themselves."

And farming is challenging in Anderson County.

"The last two years were just killer weather-wise. That's what pushed me to diversify into hay production," he said.

Braden's focus for the future is to continue diversifying and gain more ground in the retail market. He currently sells grain to area poultry farmers, but he'd like to sell directly to consumers, perhaps through a corn-sacking facility for small farm and hunting use.

He'd also like to grow their hay business. But mostly, he just wants to get better.

"There's always a better way to do it or some way to improve. It's a learning curve," he said. "I'm going to try to do a better job of utilizing the land a little more. Controlling water better, controlling weeds better, trying to get a handle on some of our wet grounds. Just being a better farmer."



TFB scholarships available to Texas students

Texas youth are future leaders and innovators for the state and nation. They have opportunities for growth, education and leadership to help them explore a bright new world, but sometimes they need a helping hand.

That’s why Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) invests in youth, devoting large amounts of money and time to develop leadership skills at a young age.

That investment comes through scholarships at the state and county levels.

“Each year, we award more than \$200,000 in scholarships at the state level, and over \$360,000 in scholarships is given each year through county Farm Bureaus,” Mia Balko, director of Youth Outreach, said. “Those come in a variety of packages in an effort to meet different student needs.”

Applicants must create an account and register through the MyTFB Membership portal at my.texasfarmbureau.org. Once there, navigate to registration, and select 2020 scholarships from the list.

All scholarships require the student to be part of a TFB member-family to qualify, and membership must be maintained for the duration of the scholarship.

The deadline to apply and submit a completed application online is March 2 before midnight.

Visit www.texasfarmbureau.org/youth/youth-opportunities for more information and the scholarship application checklist.

Contact Balko at mbalko@txfb.org with questions.

Dick Mitchell Scholarship

This \$1,000 scholarship is awarded to one high school junior or senior who has attended the TFB Youth Leadership Conference.

Young Farmer & Rancher Scholarship

High school seniors interested in a future in agriculture are eligible for TFB’s Young Farmer & Rancher scholarship. Each of TFB’s 13 districts will award one \$1,000 scholarship.

Memorial/Honorary and District Scholarships

In each of the 13 TFB districts, four students will be award-

ed \$1,500 scholarships. Three students from each district also will be awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.

Young Farmer & Rancher Enrolled Scholarship

The YF&R Enrolled Scholarship is for students already in college. Applicants must have a minimum of 45 credit hours and a GPA of 2.5 or higher to qualify. Three \$2,000 YF&R enrolled scholarships will be awarded.

Student Teaching Award

Four senior Agricultural Education students will receive the Texas Farm Bureau Student Teaching Award each semester. The scholarships, valued at \$2,500, aims to help students cover expenses during their spring semester of off-campus student teaching. Students who will be student teaching off-campus in fall 2020 or spring 2021 are encouraged to apply. This year, there will only be one application period.

TSTC Scholarships

TFB has made scholarship funds available to first-year and enrolled students attending Texas State Technical College (TSTC). Fifty \$1,000 scholarships are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis through the Texan Success Scholarship. There are also five \$1,000 scholarships for TFB members entering their second year at TSTC. Another \$5,000 is available through the “helping hands” scholarship, which is meant to help students with unexpected costs that are not usually covered by traditional scholarships.

S.M. True Jr. Agricultural Scholar Award

To acknowledge former TFB President S.M. True Jr., a \$20,000 scholarship was established for college students with at least 60 hours of college credit and declared agriculture as their major. Applicants must submit a completed application and two letters of recommendation—one from the county Farm Bureau president and one from the dean or head of the agricultural department of the applicant’s college or university. Students are encouraged to apply at the end of their sophomore year for TFB’s most prestigious scholarship.



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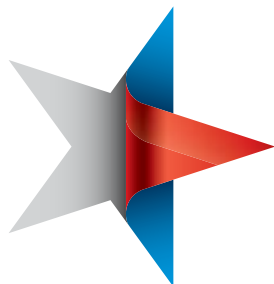
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Don't get burned

Follow these firewood tips



TIPS

By Jennifer Dorsett
Field Editor

Firewood. It's the star of every cozy night in front of the fireplace. Essential fuel for the tender, slow-cooked pit barbecue so loved by Texans.

What's a weekend at the deer lease without a campfire to sit around and trade hunting stories? And s'mores just don't taste the same without that toasty char, courtesy of a summer bonfire.

It's clear that firewood plays a major role in some of our favorite memories.

But that tradition could be at risk if Texans don't handle firewood properly. Diseases and pests are easily transmitted by moving fallen trees and cut firewood.

Remember: buy local, burn local. The best option is to select firewood that comes from within a 50-mile radius of where it's going to be burned.

Don't transport wood from the hunting camp to the house, or vice versa. Harvest the wood nearby, or buy firewood from a reputable source.

Bringing in wood from other areas poses several problems like oak wilt and introducing invasive species.

What is oak wilt?

Firewood from other areas—including other counties in Texas—can spread oak wilt disease, a devastating fungal infection that is fatal to oak trees.

Oak wilt is prevalent in Central Texas. According to the Texas Forest Service, there are now 76 counties across the state with confirmed cases of oak wilt, mostly along the I-35 corridor.

The *Bretziella fagacearum* fungus inhibits the tree's ability to conduct water through its vascular system, causing the tree to die.

All oaks are susceptible, but red oak species are affected more dramatically, often completely succumbing to the disease in as little as three months.

People often unknowingly transmit oak wilt to new areas when cutting up fallen trees and taking the wood home for firewood.

Invasive species

And there are other pests, too.

The red imported fire ant and emerald ash borer are invasive species with established quarantine zones in Texas.

The Texas Department of Agriculture prohibits moving plant materials, such as firewood, from inside quarantined areas to prevent the spread of these pests.

Buying firewood

- Look for well-seasoned firewood that was cut in the spring or early summer. In addition to burning more efficiently, the summer heat usually destroys fungus and other diseases in cut wood as it dries.

- Seasoned wood is typically dry, with loose bark and cracked ends. If the bark is hard to peel back, it's probably still wet.

- Well-seasoned wood doesn't smell like wood. Most of the scent of fresh-cut wood is caused by moisture.

- Seasoned wood should also have a somewhat gray tone. The more sun exposure it has received, the better.

Storing firewood

- Store firewood at least five feet away from the house. Stacking it right against the structure is an open invitation to termites and other pests to come inside.

- Try not to store firewood directly on the ground. Even a couple of inches of elevation can be useful in preventing ground moisture from getting into the wood. Again, a lack of moisture is key to better burning.

- Store firewood out of the shade and with enough space for air to circulate.

- Alternating rows between length and width allows for good airflow and creates a more stable structure than stacking it all one direction.

- Keep the woodpile four feet high or less. Anything taller can become unstable and seriously hurt someone if it crashes down on top of them.

- If the wood came from an unknown source or was transported from far away, cover it with plastic sheeting and bury the edges underground. This will keep any insects or diseases from inadvertently spreading to nearby live trees.

By implementing these practices when buying and storing firewood, people are ensuring future generations of Texans can enjoy making memories around the fire, too.

20 QUESTIONS

with

Texas FFA President

Carlye Winfrey



HOMETOWN: Seminole, Texas

FFA Chapter: Seminole FFA

Years in FFA: 6 years

Connect with Carly:



Q. How did your passion for agriculture/FFA develop?

A. Watching my grandmother tend her large garden to not only feed her family but also provide for those in need in her community, along with riding shotgun in my grandfather's farm truck to go check the cows or if his hay crop was ready to harvest, are some of my fondest memories of visiting my grandparents' farm and ranch in Cross Plains, Texas.

I believe witnessing how proud my grandparents were of their agricultural way of life instilled that same passion in me. Through my involvement in FFA, I have grown that passion day by day. I may not live on a farm and ranch, but I know there are a myriad of ways to be involved in agriculture, and I plan on continuing to develop that passion and love for an industry that has been an integral part of my family's life for generations.

Q. What made you decide to get involved in FFA?

A. There was never a question that I would be involved in FFA. My entire family has always been involved. Both my parents were in FFA and then my brothers were, as well. I started raising and showing livestock at jackpot shows before I was old enough to show through 4-H and FFA because my brothers were. As soon as I was old enough, I began showing at my county show and all the majors in Texas and then later at some of the national shows. My dad was also an ag teacher for a few years before I was born, so I was definitely going to join. Since then, I fell in love with the leadership development it offered, and it pushed me to get involved even more.

Q. What FFA achievements are you most proud of?

A. One of my proudest achievements in FFA was when I won the National Contest in Greenhand Creed Speaking. Creed speaking is what started my passion for FFA, and I was incredibly grateful to have the opportunity to represent Texas on a national level reciting words that mean so much to me and all FFA members.

Q. What does FFA mean to you?

A. FFA means home to me. FFA was something that always brought my family together, even if we were states apart. Traveling throughout Texas this year, FFA has developed a meaning of home, because I have met so many people who have loved me like family.

Q. Why did you decide to run for state office?

A. I decided to run for state office, because it was an opportunity to give back to the FFA organization. Through FFA, I have won contests and garnered scholarships. However, the most important thing to me is the personal development and common purpose we as FFA members all share.

Q. If you could pick any previous FFA member to have dinner with, who would it be and why?

A. I would choose Erica Clark who served as the first female Texas FFA president in 1991. I would love to hear what it was like being a female leading this organization at that time and to hear the stories she has and what she experienced.

Q. What is your favorite FFA contest?

A. The Job Interview contest would have to be my favorite FFA has to offer.

Q. What are your responsibilities as the Texas FFA president?

A. As Texas FFA state president, I am tasked with serving the FFA members of our state. This consists of traveling the state conducting leadership workshops and facilitating conferences, developing new opportunities for members and policies alongside National FFA voting delegates at National FFA convention and working with my 11 teammates to host the annual Texas FFA State Convention. My hope is that through these efforts I am having a positive impact on members' lives and our organization.

Q. Who has influenced your path in FFA the most and how?

A. Someone who has influenced my path most in FFA would be my older brothers, Bryce and Alec. They both served as Texas FFA state officers and were a big part of why I decided to run. I saw their passion and love they had for FFA and the way they served this organization wholeheartedly and wanted to do the same.

Q. Why should students today consider a career in agriculture?

A. Just as FFA is rapidly changing, so is the world of agriculture. I believe that a student who chooses a career in agriculture has an opportunity to be involved in various efforts that positively contribute to the world we live in. With the diversity of careers in ag today, students are almost guaranteed to find a career that utilizes their skill set and lead a purpose-driven professional life.

Q. Why should students join FFA?

A. No matter where you are from, there is a place for you in FFA. Some of the most rapid growth in FFA membership in Texas and across the U.S. is in larger urban areas. FFA has recognized this and continued to develop opportunities designed for urban area students with a strong interest in agriculture while still holding on to the roots of our organization. I think it's neat that we are not only a student organization that welcomes everyone but also an organization that is making a conscious effort to adopt and bring forth meaningful changes.

Q. What are your strengths/weaknesses?

A. One strength I believe I hold is organization. I love when things are on schedule, neat and prepped. However, with having a strength of organization, my weakness is that I'm a perfectionist. Since I am a perfectionist, it sometimes takes more time for me to accomplish tasks, and I recognize my need to develop more flexibility.

Q. What are your plans after you graduate high school?

A. I plan to attend Texas Tech University and double major in Agricultural Communications and Political Science with a minor in Animal Science. I hope to one day work in a communications capacity within government that allows me to develop positive change for our agricultural industry.

Q. Best advice you would give an FFA member?

A. The best advice I would give an FFA member is to show up and get involved. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do in FFA, but I took the first step by trying Greenhand Creed Speaking in eighth grade. All it takes is signing your name on that signup sheet or telling your ag teacher you want to try something. Taking that leap is so worthwhile.

Q. What is your favorite part of FFA?

A. My favorite part of FFA is seeing the change it produces in students. I believe I am a personal example of this. FFA pushed me outside my comfort zone by giving me opportunities to speak to industry leaders or in front of major crowds. I love watching students join FFA and not only create positive change for our organization but watch this organization make changes in those students' lives.

Q. What is your favorite color and why?

A. My favorite color is dark green. I have always loved green, and it's probably because I grew up in West Texas where dark green is a rare sight to see.

Q. What is your favorite song and why?

A. My favorite song is *Diamonds & Gasoline* by Turnpike Troubadours. I grew up listening to Turnpike with my dad and mom while traveling across the state for stock shows or FFA events, and this song always reminds me of those good times.

Q. What is your favorite movie and why?

A. I'm a pretty big Harry Potter fan, so any of those films would have to be my favorite.

Q. What FFA activities have you participated in?

A. **LDEs:** Junior Creed Speaking, Junior Quiz, Senior Creed Speaking, Job Interview and Senior Quiz

CDEs: Wool Judging, Poultry Judging and Livestock Judging

SDEs: Agribusiness Prepared Speaking and Agriculture Technology & Communications Prepared Speaking

SAEs: Show lambs (primarily), goats, hogs, steers and rabbits; Texas FFA Ford Leadership Scholars

Q. If you were a superhero, who would you be? Why?

A. I would obviously choose to be Wonder Woman because of her strength and ability to rock curled hair in battle.



Visit www.texasffa.org to learn more about Texas FFA.

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS IN AG

reflect more women, young farmers

Times are changing. That's true for agriculture, as well.

Technology. Consumer demands. Prices. But that's not all. Farm demographics in Texas and the United States are changing, too.

Women and young farmers and ranchers are doing their part in agriculture, breaking stereotypes and pursuing their passions.

In the 2017 Census of Agriculture, 36 percent of all farmers were women, and 56 percent of all farms reported at least one woman makes decisions impacting operations.

There are over 1.2 million female farmers in America and 156,233 in the Lone Star State.

Young farmers and ranchers also play a significant role in agriculture. According to the census, there are 321,261 farmers and ranchers under the age of 35 in the U.S. In Texas, there are 28,187 young farmers.

That's promising. These men and women are the future of agriculture. Technology and advancements in agriculture will help them be more efficient than ever before.

What about new and beginning

farmers and ranchers? Well, there are 908,274 in the U.S. and 118,999 of them are Texans.

Eager. Tenacious. Yet cautious. The challenges are many for those in agriculture, but a fresh perspective and innovative skills will move them, and the industry, forward.

There's a lot of data in the census—some 6.4 million data points to be more accurate. But it's important to recognize the contributions of all farmers—women and men, young and old, new and experienced. Without their efforts, Texas agriculture wouldn't be the same.



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THIS IS FARM BUREAU

Texas Farm Bureau membership grows again!

We're family at Texas Farm Bureau. A big one. This year, we gained 2,994 member-families, and we're now 529,871 member-families strong.

"From small towns to big cities and everywhere in between, Texas Farm Bureau members come together to directly shape and influence our policies and activities in Austin and Washington, D.C.," TFB President Russell Boening said. "Without our members, we wouldn't—and couldn't—be the Voice of Texas Agriculture."

Of the 205 organized county Farm Bureaus, 143 counties recorded a membership gain in 2019.

"We're proud to say we've been growing for 19 years and counting, and we look forward to another great year advocating for agriculture on the local, state and national levels," Boening said.

County Farm Bureaus were recognized for membership achievements during the 86th annual meeting in San Antonio.

Texas Farm Bureau is **529,871** member-families strong

- County signing the most new members:
Brazoria-Galveston County Farm Bureau with 1,891 members
- County reporting the largest total membership gain:
McLennan County Farm Bureau with 714 members
- County with the highest membership renewal percentage:
Fisher County Farm Bureau with 94.96 percent
- County with the largest membership:
Collin County Farm Bureau with 13,373 members
- County with the longest continuous gain in membership:
DeWitt County Farm Bureau for 70 years

Prepared by our past to focus on our future

During Texas Farm Bureau's (TFB) 86th Annual Meeting in San Antonio, new board members and officers were elected.

Russell Boening of Wilson County was re-elected president.

Zack Yanta of Karnes County was elected vice president, and Val Stephens of Dawson County was elected secretary-treasurer.

Re-elected to two-year terms were Pat McDowell of Wheeler County, Mark Daniel of Baylor County, Allen Kaminski of Austin County and Scott Frazier of Nueces County.

Three new directors were also elected.

Kevin Wilkerson of Mabank will represent District 5.

He has a commercial cow-calf

operation, stocker operation and a custom hay baling business in Van Zandt County. He also has a custom metal design and fabrication business. Wilkerson has participated in TFB's leadership program, FarmLead, and served on TFB's Small Farm & Ranch and Resolutions committees. He and his wife Pam have four children.

The new District 7 state director is Sam Snyder of Moran.

He raises cattle and grows wheat in Callahan and Shackelford counties. He has served several years in numerous roles—including president, vice president and secretary/treasurer—on the Callahan-Shackelford County Farm Bureau board of directors. He has participated in FarmLead



Kevin Wilkerson



Sam Snyder



John K. Griffith

and served on TFB's Natural Resources, Resolutions and Feral Hog committees. He and his wife Mary Anna have two children and four grandchildren.

John Griffith of Alto is the new District 9 state director.

He is an agricultural science teacher at Alto High School. He has a commercial cow-calf operation and grows hay in Cherokee

County. Griffith has been an active member of Cherokee County Farm Bureau, serving as president, vice president and secretary/treasurer. He has also served on TFB's Resolutions Committee and traveled to Washington to advocate for agriculture with TFB's National Affairs Awards Trip. He and his wife Kimberly have two children.

DeWitt County Farm Bureau reaches historic membership gain

In rural Texas, some things never change. Small town camaraderie. Crops and cattle. Friday night lights. DeWitt County Farm Bureau (CFB) membership grows. Again.

DeWitt County Farm Bureau membership has grown every year since 1949. That 70-year streak is likely the largest of any CFB in the nation.

important to move forward,” Dukes said. “I’ve been a board member on and off for 30 years now, and it was instilled in me early on that we were always trying to increase our membership and increase our reach for rural Texas and Texas agriculture.”

Some years are tougher than others for membership. There have been some years, Dukes noted,



“Agriculture has changed a lot over the past 70 years and so has Texas,” Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) President Russell Boening said. “We’ve gone from a largely rural to a majority urban population, with fewer people involved in farming and ranching every year. But the board members in DeWitt County have remained dedicated to keeping people engaged in agriculture and growing our membership the entire time.”

It’s a big accomplishment. No other CFB in Texas has even come close. As far as anyone knows, it’s also a record for the American Farm Bureau Federation, too.

It’s not an easy task to keep adding members year after year. But it’s always been a priority in DeWitt County, according to current DeWitt CFB President Wes Dukes.

“We have several longtime members who have said, as far back as they can remember, it was always

when board members and county employees had to work more to achieve a gain, but the efforts have always paid off.

“DeWitt County is a great place to live,” he said. We believe strongly in what the organization does for rural Texans and farmers and ranchers in Austin and Washington, D.C.”

The membership gains wouldn’t be possible without the help of longtime CFB Secretary Myra Parr, he added. It’s a point of pride to all DeWitt CFB staff that they’ve managed to help keep the record going for so long.

“Our philosophy is there’s always room for improvement,” Dukes said. “Until the last person in DeWitt County is a member, we won’t quit.”

For more information on Texas Farm Bureau membership, visit texasfarmbureau.org/membership/.

MAKING NEWS AT THE TFB RADIO NETWORK

Meet the newest member of the Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network team—Carey D. Martin!

Carey joined us as network manager on Dec. 1. He also serves as Texas Farm Bureau associate director of Communications – Radio.

Carey comes to the network from the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation, where he served for 22 years. His work included roles as communications specialist at the Voice of Louisiana Agriculture Radio Network, as director of Information and Public Relations and as an area field representative.

Carey’s farm broadcasting career also includes commercial network/station work in Baton Rouge, Tulsa, Oklahoma City and Omaha.

He was recently elected southern region vice president of the National Association of Farm Broadcasting (NAFB).

Carey joins Tom Nicolette and Jessica Domel on the Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network, the number one most-listened to agricultural news radio network in the state of Texas.



Listen to Texas News and Views, Focus on Agriculture and the other offerings of the Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network at <https://texasfarmbureau.org/radio>

TFB Network programs can also be heard in non-serviced areas at

[TEXASFARMBUREAU.ORG](https://texasfarmbureau.org)



10 things to know about Texas farmers, ranchers

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Calloused hands and sun-kissed skin. Mud on her boots and grease on his pants. Exhaustion is in their eyes, yet each step has the spring of earlier years.

He's a farmer, and so is she. They're running tractors and plows from sun up to sun down. Working cattle and baling hay.

It's not an easy job.

And that's one of the many reasons I respect farmers and ranchers. Here's 10 things to know about Texas farmers and ranchers.

10.

Farming and ranching is tough. Early mornings. Late nights. Long hours in between. They rarely complain. They just saddle up for the day and ride on through.

9.

It's a dirty job. No doubt about that. They come home covered in mud and grease. There are rips and tears in their clothes, and they often have a distinct smell.

8.

Farmers and ranchers strive to improve with each crop and each year. They're efficient and tech-savvy. And they're the definition of sustainability.

7.

They endure the demands of the field. Market swings can take their toll. And your consumer opinion could leave a harvest at risk.

6.

Working in that Texas heat isn't for the faint of heart. Several days of 100+ degrees can melt a person, but farmers and ranchers keep going. They make sure their livestock are cared for and their crops are harvested no matter what the heat index reads.

5.

Vacation and weekends are words not often used on the farm, because there's no break from feeding and caring for livestock, growing crops and teaching the next generation about agriculture.

4.

They get their kids involved on the farm and ranch. They help with chores, ride in the combine during harvest or help move cattle to another pasture. Together, they're building on the time-honored tradition of Texas agriculture.

3.

Farmers and ranchers teach their kids the value of hard work, responsibility, time management, loyalty, respect and trust at an early age. Those are qualities we need in our future farmers and ranchers but also in our future Congressional leaders, teachers, coaches and businessmen and women.

2.

They grow food, fiber and fuel for their families and mine. And they don't even know all of their customers' names. But that's okay. Because their backyard can feed and clothe us. And they don't ask for any thanks in return.

And the number one thing to know about Texas farmers and ranchers...

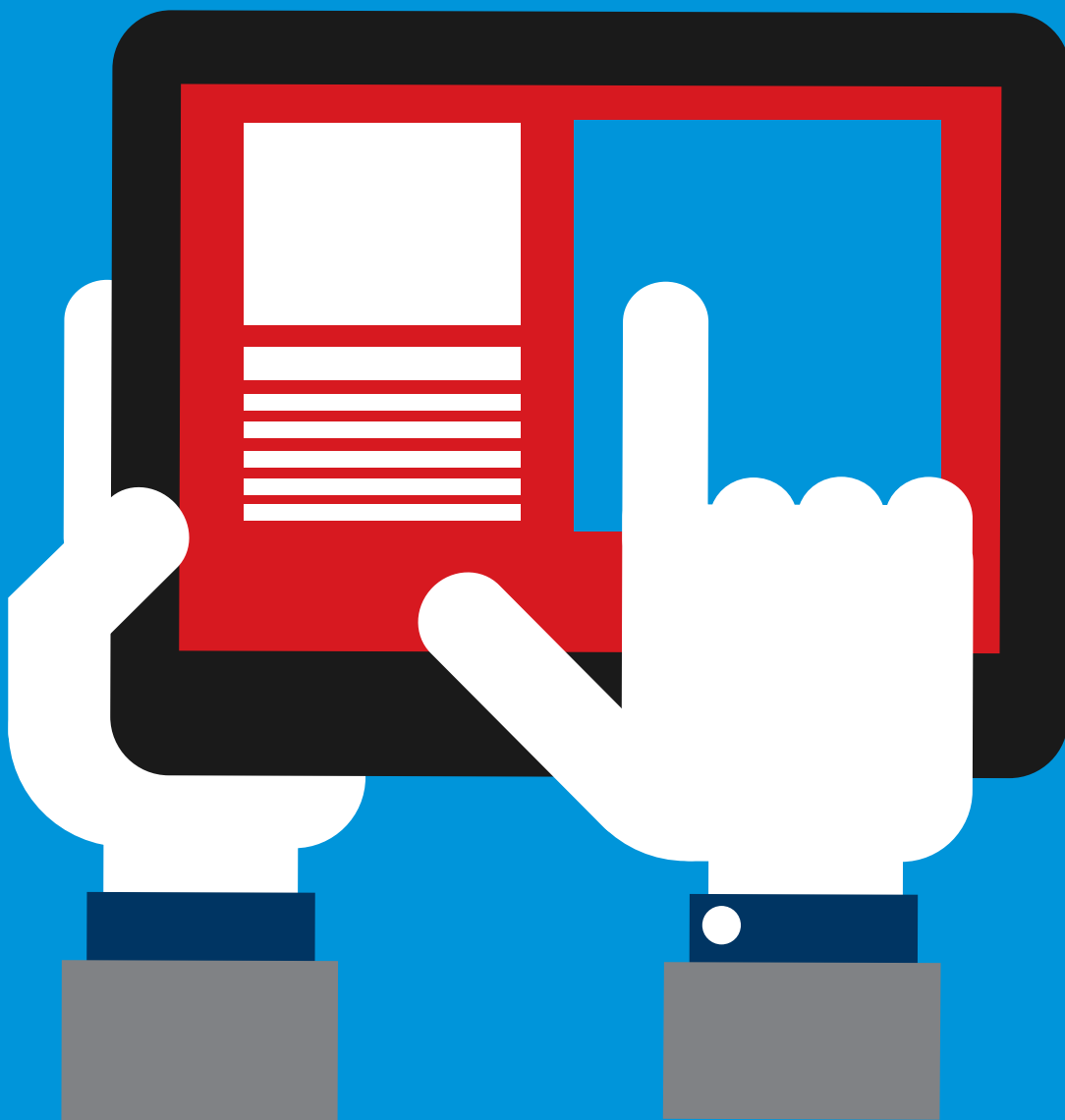
1.

They're the first to lend a helping hand. When a neighbor is sick or in need of help, farmers and ranchers are there. And they serve on school boards, as community leaders or as volunteers—always working to better the area they live and work in.

Farming and ranching is a lifestyle. A labor of love. It's the roots that hold a family legacy, brings communities together and fuels the world economy. And farmers and ranchers are just like you and me, working to help build better communities and a better Texas.

Let's Get Social

Connect with @texasfarmbureau



THE EEDERS

excel in agriculture



**By Jennifer Dorsett
Field Editor**

Wharton County Farm Bureau members Zach and Sarah Eder met while attending college at Texas A&M University and have been passionately promoting agriculture together ever since, one lesson at a time.

“Our mission through our jobs is really to advertise and promote agriculture and teach people,” Sarah said. “Teach farmers how to farm better, how to use their resources wisely. Teach students about agriculture and where their food comes from.”

Sarah teaches physics and biotechnology at El Campo High School. She uses plant genetics and agricultural concepts in her biotechnology classes through a Monsanto Fund grant she applied for and won.

Each semester, her class identifies key scientific discoveries and how they influence the future of agriculture. Technologies like CRISPR, GMOs and antibiotic developments all have technical aspects that she teaches.

And she enjoys being able to share that passion and knowledge with Zach, who is an agronomist and technology development director for Advanta, a global seed company.

“Having a spouse who shares the same interest is great. When he talks about the different plants and the modifications they’re doing, their new lines and the varieties, I understand. And I can contribute to the conversation, and vice versa, with my biotech class,” she said. “He’s there to give me new ideas and say, ‘Hey, this is

what they’re doing in agriculture now.’ I get to incorporate that into my class and help my students, because we share the same interests and the same sort of line of work.”

Zach is responsible for hybrid testing, field days and agronomic assistance. He partners with a variety of entities to conduct more than 150 research trials. He also serves as the U.S. project leader for the new technology team, which is working with the first herbicide-tolerant sorghum to be launched in the U.S.

“We’re working to modernize a crop that has been left behind in the recent GMO and technology-driven seed industry,” Zach said. “It’s a great way to innovate and provide producers a new opportunity, as well as bringing them back to a crop they may have shifted away from in previous years because of insect and weed pressures.”

In addition to developing promising seed genetics and guiding those crops to potential marketability, Zach is a lead agronomist, traveling across the U.S. to assist farmers.

“I’m responsible for all the research locations for bringing products to commercial, as well as supporting our producers agronomically throughout the season. It’s a very challenging role. It’s also very exciting, and the greatest advantage is that it gives a lot of perspective,” he said.

But that extensive travel schedule can be tough on the Eder family, which includes their two sons, Victor and Walter.

It takes Zach and Sarah working

together to juggle career responsibilities with family duties, as well as their small cattle herd.

“Every summer when harvest season starts, that means I’m on the road. It could be a day. It could be two days. It could be weeks at a time, and it’s hard at home. But without Sarah at

home, it wouldn’t be possible. We understand that, together, we can both achieve our goals, but we must be a good team,” Zach said.

In addition to their demanding careers, the couple raises about 60 head of cattle in Wharton County. Sarah also began making

pickles eight years ago and now sells roughly 250 quarts each year.

It’s a busy lifestyle, but one Zach and Sarah enjoy and take pride in.

“There are busy seasons in agriculture and education,” Sarah said. “We live by the seasons! But we have such a great support system that it makes it manageable. We buckle down, and we make it through the busy months and call in our support system and get the help that we need and just plow on through.”

And they always make time for family.

The Eders’ oldest son, Victor, already has a passion for tractor implements, insects and plants. He and his brother just might follow a path similar to their parents.



Smoking *the* competition





**By Jennifer Dorsett
Field Editor**

Smoke, salt, spice and teamwork were on full display as students from across Texas participated in the first-ever World Food Championships High School BBQ competition last fall.

Among those were members of the FFA chapter at James Madison High School in San Antonio. They're part of the fast-growing statewide High School BBQ competition organization.

High School BBQ, Inc. was founded by culinary arts teacher and veteran pitmaster Chuck Schoenfeld, who competed professionally in barbecue cookoffs for more than 40 years.

Five years ago, they embarked on a journey to bring competition barbecue cookoffs to high schoolers in Texas. The organization now hosts a series of 10 regional competitions around the state in which the top 10 teams from each event advance to the state championship in May.

"This is our second year of doing traveling regional cookoffs. We are growing with leaps and bounds," Chuck said. "It's going

to be a very, very fun and chaotic season for us. Our goal is to have 100 teams at the championship this year in Burnet, Texas."

And the teens learn so much more than just how to smoke a brisket.

"It's a passion. We really love the high schoolers," Marnie Schoenfeld, Chuck's wife and head judging facilitator for High School BBQ, said. "They're learning a skill that they can then show their own children someday, or maybe they'll come back as college students and mentor a team. It teaches them teamwork, cooking, problem-solving, time management and leadership lessons that will last a lifetime."

The World Food Championships (WFC) is an annual competition created to spotlight the best chefs, cooks and pitmasters in the world as they vie for the championship title and hundreds of thousands of dollars in prize money. It was the first year the WFC was held in Dallas. Mike McCloud, the president and CEO of WFC, said when he heard about Texas high school barbecue teams, he knew they had to be part of the event somehow.

"The purpose of the World Food Championships is to identify and celebrate great cooks and chefs regardless of their training or background," McCloud said. "We felt High School BBQ was a wonderful way to embrace the next generation and ignite that fire in their belly for food competitions."

And James Madison High School's two teams, the Bar-B-QTs and Outlaw Cookers, definitely felt that fire. They dished up some fierce competition at WFC, taking home top awards in two categories, with Outlaw Cookers finishing third and Bar-B-QTs finishing fourth place overall.

Not bad for a school that didn't even have barbecue teams until January.

"I heard about High School BBQ last fall and was interested, but I'm not one that barbecues," Lane Baker, James Madison agricultural science teacher and FFA advisor, said. "I'm more of the master of the microwave, but a couple of dads of students helped out, and we've formed some really good teams."

In addition to gaining a variety of practical skills, Baker's stu-

dents say they've formed a better understanding of agriculture through the experience.

Gage White, a sophomore member of the Outlaw Cookers, has been raising and showing pigs through FFA for several years. The connection between animal and meat is a lot clearer to him now.

"Being able to see what I'm raising and what it's ending up as, in a market setting, is really very cool because I can see the quality of what's coming to me to cook and the quality of what I'm bringing up," White said.

But it's not all about studying meat charts and out-smoking other teams. There's a lighter side to high school barbecue, too.

"It's competitive, but it's not just about us and winning. Our families are a big part of this," Savannah Bond, a junior on the all-female Bar-B-QTs team, said. "For practices, we all go to one house, and we cook, and we eat, and we all hang out. We all feel like a big family."

For more information on starting a high school barbecue team, visit High School BBQ, Inc. at <https://thsbcawildapricot.org/>.



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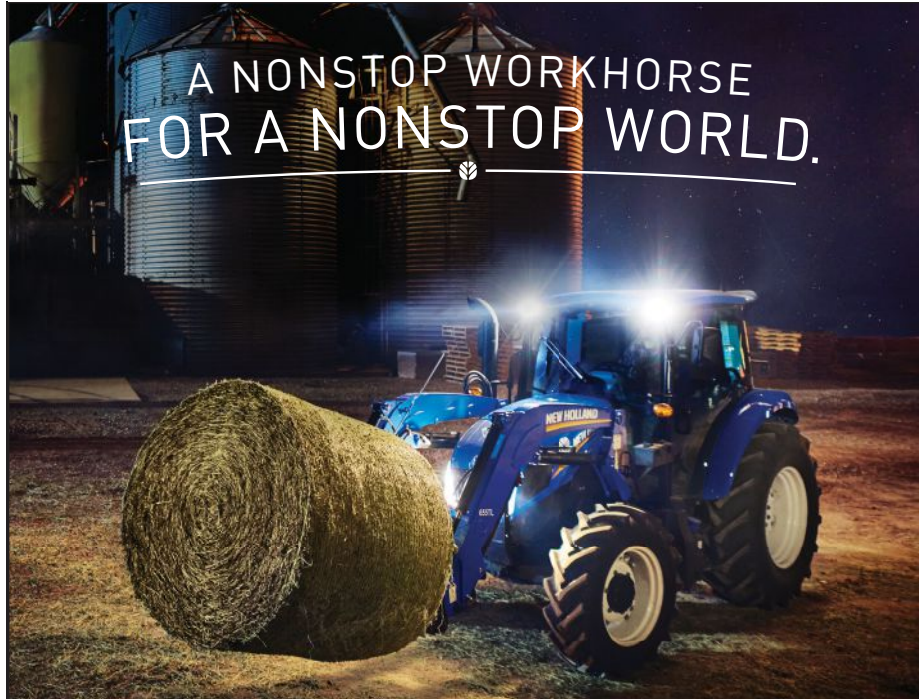
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TEXAS CITRUS

is a slice of sunshine
in the winter



By Jennifer Dorsett
Field Editor

When the winter blues have you feeling down, reach for a slice of sunshine—in the form of sweet Texas citrus.

Citrus fruit has been grown in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas since the 18th century, when the first orange trees were planted on the Laguna Seca Ranch in the area now known as Hidalgo County.

By the early 1900s, citrus was a vital sector of the Texas agriculture industry. Commercial orchards were planted along the Texas Gulf Coast, from the Rio Grande Valley to areas as far north as Houston and Beaumont.

The first commercial grapefruit

orchard was planted in 1904. By 1925, grapefruit made up around 80 percent of the annual Texas citrus crop.

In fact, the Ruby Red grapefruit was discovered and patented in Texas in 1929. Before then, grapefruit was classified as either white or pink, referring to the fruit's pulp color. The pink and white varieties are often bitter or sour, with a wide range in between the two flavors.

By contrast, the Ruby Red variety had a deep red pulp, low acidity and sweet flavor. A marketing star was born, and the Texas red grapefruit industry blossomed.

In the late 1940s, there were about 9 million producing citrus

trees on more than 100,000 acres in Texas.

A series of hard freezes devastated the Texas citrus industry over the next several decades, culminating in two severe freezes during the 1980s that reduced planted citrus acreage to less than 12,000 acres.

Urbanization, a shift in land use to other crops and thinner profit margins mean Texas citrus never recovered to numbers of the mid-20th century again, but the industry has stabilized over the last 20 years.

Today, the Texas citrus industry is mainly comprised of grapefruit and oranges grown across Hidal-

go, Willacy and Cameron counties in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. It is estimated that less than 100 acres of other citrus crops (such as lemons or limes) remain in production.

Citrus trees bloom in Texas around mid-February, then fruit grows on the trees throughout the spring and summer. Harvest begins in October and typically wraps up the following April.

Nearly 27,000 acres of orchards produce more than 9 million cartons of grapefruit and oranges and another 5 million cartons of juice fruit annually, contributing more than \$200 million to the Texas economy.

Pretty sweet!



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