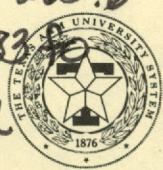


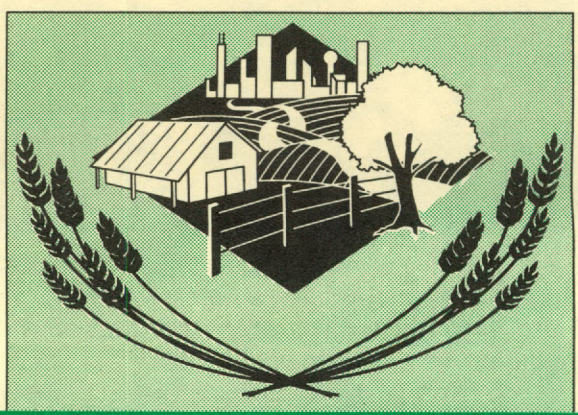
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Texas Agricultural Extension Service  
The Texas A&M University System

# The AgriFood Master

Teaching the Foundation of the Nation



Vol. 4, No. 2 The Statewide Newsletter of the Texas AgriFood Master (TAM) Program Summer '99

## WHAT WILL THEY REMEMBER?

In October 1998, 19 Extension volunteers were hosting an Ag Science Fair at William Anderson Elementary School in Dallas with 435 children experiencing their very first Ag Science Fair. A teacher's response to a simple question explained the value of the day's event best. I asked, "What will the fourth grade students participating in today's Ag Science Fair remember or retain about how agriculture impacts their lives everyday?"

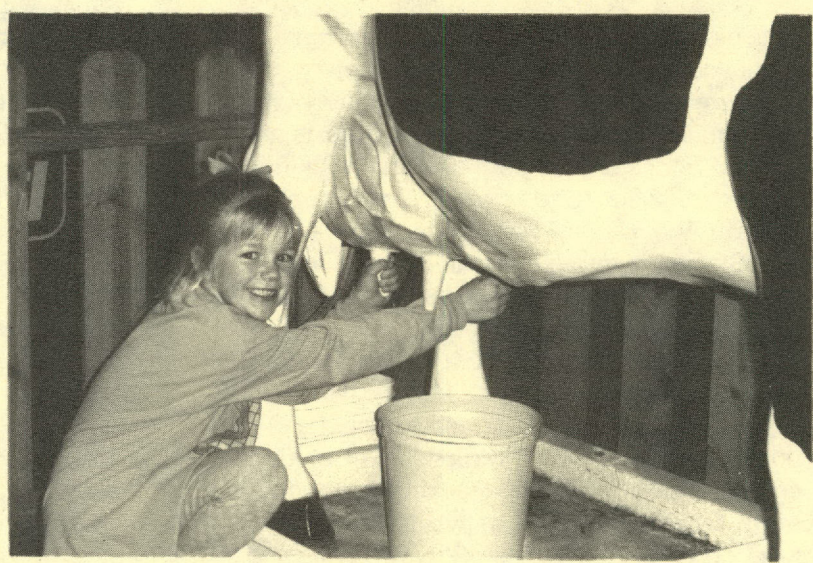
The teacher's response was in the form of a question. She asked, "Andy, do you remember a field trip or similar experience you had while in fourth grade?" It took me less than a second to recall a November 1965 outdoor event at McMurry College in Abilene, Texas. I said to the teacher, "Yes, I do remember an event I experienced when I was in fourth grade."

The teacher then said, "Today's Ag Science Fair provides an experience like you had, Andy; these children will remember today

for their lifetime." My reply to that was, "Then it's important that we're here."

Two Texas A&M studies (Pullen and Vestal, 1995, and Blackburn, Skaggs and Vestal, 1999) clearly showed the value of experiential education. In 1995, 2,600 Dallas and Bexar County students increased their post-

Fairs on school campuses have caught on in 60 counties and now reach more than 100,000 children annually. They provide experiential learning and are complimentary to classroom curricula such as Ag in the Classroom, Food, Land and People and others. Ag Science Fairs and their host



test scores regarding animal and plant sciences, food sciences and natural resource subjects by 19 percent. In a 1999 study involving 2,962 students in six Texas counties, students who had participated in Ag Science Fair events scored approximately 18 percent higher than did students who had not participated in these events,

of dedicated volunteers feature 10 to 12 outdoor educational stations that allow a hands-on approach to learning Texas' Essential Knowledge and Skills in math, social studies, health and science, using agricultural illustrations.

Since 1992, Ag Science

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## Texas Students Surveyed to Assess Ag Knowledge, Attitudes

A recent survey of school children in six Texas counties showed that students who previously attend an Ag Science Fair knew slightly more and had more positive attitudes about agriculture than students who did not attend.

The Texas Agricultural Extension Service works with the Texas Farm Bureau, 4-H, FFA and other agricultural organizations to host Ag Science Fairs across the state. More than 100,000 children are expected to participate in these events in 1999. Agribusiness leaders, volunteers and private and public school in more than 60 Texas counties hosted Ag Science Fair events in 1998. To assist volunteers in planning and implementing these events, an Ag Science Fair guide for volunteers is available on-line at <http://aged.tamu.edu/programs/agrifood/tam1.html>.

"The purpose of an Ag Science Fair," explained researchers Dee Anne Blackburn and Jason Skaggs, "is to expose students to various agricultural industries and provide educational experiences to inform students about how agriculture impacts people in their everyday lives." Blackburn, a Idalou, Texas native, serves as an AgriFood Education Program assistant with the Extension Service. She completed her master's degree in Agricultural Education at Texas A&M in May. Skaggs, a native of Austin, Texas, will complete his master's of agribusiness degree at Mississippi State in December.

The research sample included 2,962 fourth-, fifth- and sixth-grade students, some of whom had attended an Ag Science Fair and a control group of students who had not. Included in the study were two rural (Karnes and Medina), two mid-size (Gregg and Tom Green) and two metropolitan (Bexar and Dallas) counties. Survey results and implications will be used to improve lesson plans and create specific learning goals for future Ag Science Fairs. The surveys included eight knowledge questions designed with the help of local county Extension agents and volunteers in each county. Questions covered livestock, crops, natural resources and foods. The researchers

ensured that the questions reflected the lessons that were taught in each county.

"Our commodities in this area are basically cotton, sheep, goats, beef cattle and beekeeping. Young people need to understand where their food comes from and know about the fiber produced in this area. They need to understand the economic impact of that cotton shirt or those wool socks they were," said Jeff Ripley, Extension agent in Tom Green County.

Usually four survey objectives assess the knowledge of children who attended versus those who did not. For example, the first objective in the Karnes County survey compared the knowledge of the fourth-, fifth- and sixth-grade students who attended a fair to those who didn't. When presented with the statement "Erosion is the process of improving the soil," 95 percent of the attendees responded correctly with an answer of false. Sixty-one percent of students who did not attend answered correctly. Overall, students in Karnes County who attended scored in the 76 percentile range while those who did not attend, scored in the 40 percentile.

Blackburn said a score in the 75 to 80 percentile range was considered average to above average. Students in Gregg, Tom Green Bexar and Medina counties scored below average.

"We think one reason students in Karnes County did so well is because their volunteers were trained to develop strong lesson plans and clear learning goals and objectives for their fairs," Blackburn said.

Survey objectives five through eight used statements like, "It is important for farm animals to eat grass and grains so humans may use their meat and other by-products," to measure student attitudes toward agriculture.

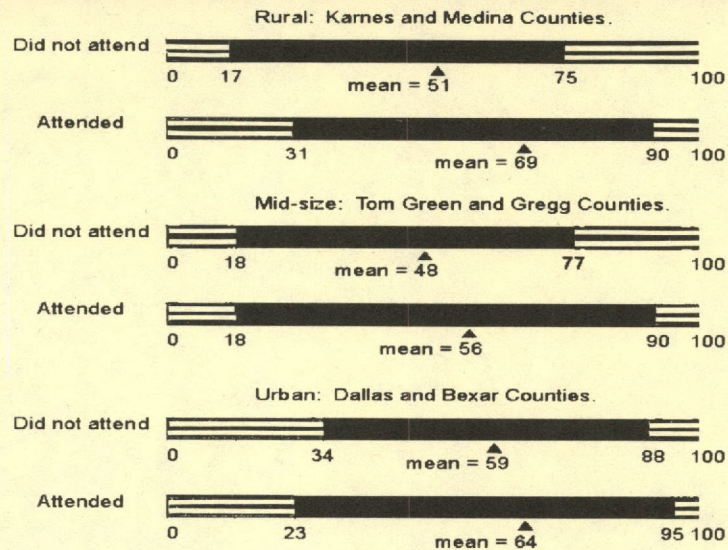
Overall, those who attended a fair generally had more positive attitudes," Blackburn said. "Experiential learning at Ag Science Fairs contributed to this."

Ripley believes the students who attend know more about agriculture and have better attitudes about it because they

### AgMazing Facts<sup>sm</sup>

"Following my investigative reporting efforts on irradiated foods, from what I know from the research, I would now prefer irradiated foods because it kills the bacteria that kills 200 people per week. Maybe we have hurt ourselves by not allowing the use of it."

Mean Knowledge Scores and Knowledge Score Ranges Grouped by County Size



## El Paso Has Newest TAM Program

Twenty enthusiastic El Paso County residents recently completed the first-ever Texas AgriFood Master training program in far West Texas. Alfred Gonzales, El Paso County Extension agent, says, "This group of individuals has given me a new lease on life. They bring so much enthusiasm and talent to the table." He continued, "I never anticipated that a group of people, especially those not directly involved in agriculture today, would have such a deep appreciation for agriculture. They are ready and able to contribute to Extension educational outreach right away."

Gonzales and the entire El Paso County Extension faculty are not new to teaching urban youths about food and fiber. They play an instrumental role in hosting the Kids and Kows program in cooperation with a number of collaborators from the dairy industry. Kids and Kows outgrew the available space at the annual Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show in El Paso in its first few years. Now it is held on an eleven-day run each March with more than 20,000 children participating.

With new and energetic Texas AgriFood Master volunteers, the faculty in El Paso County can reach more citizens than ever with an educational program by training the trainers.

## Agricultural Awareness Conference Set

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Texas Tech University College of Agriculture Science and Natural Resources will host the Unity in Agriculture conference in an effort to create an environment for successful agricultural awareness programs to share ideas and pave a road for the future. The event, which leads up to the annual Farmer's- Stockman Show in Lubbock will also provide agricultural information to educators, media and the general public.

Event: Unity in Agriculture Conference

When: October 10-12, 1999

Where: Holiday Inn - Lubbock Plaza,  
Lubbock, Texas

Contacts: Wendy Whalen or Jacqui Lockaby  
at 806-742-2818



# The AgriFood Master

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## Miniature Cotton Gins in High Dmeand

Processing the Fabric of Our Lives, a lesson plan that accompanies four experiential education modules designed to teach fourth grade students about Texas' largest cropping enterprise, has drawn plenty of attention. The modules, complete with miniature cotton gin, are the result of a partnership between the Texas Cotton Ginners Association and TAEX Agrifood Education Program. What's more is that fourth grade TAAS/TEKS objectives require students to learn sequence mechanical events. The lesson in this module does just that by using visuals that start at harvest time in the field, with the miniature cotton gin and end by showing the finest fabric on the retail market.

A special thank you to our newsletter sponsor, First State Bank of Uvalde

### Educational Resource Contacts

#### Processing the Fabric of our Lives

- Gin 1 Hondo  
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- Gin 2 Lubbock  
Michelle Coffman/Jett  
Majors at 806-746-6101
- Gin 3 Bryan  
Candace Young at  
409-845-6800
- Gin 4 Dallas  
Dan James/Joann  
Whitmer at  
972-952-9243

#### Texas Natural Fibers exhibit

Portfolio Case  
Edna Eisfeldt at  
409-845-2704

### The TAM MISSION...

...to recruit and train urban volunteers to provide agricultural, natural resources, biotechnology, food and environmental education for consumer and youth audiences to ensure wise decisions are made about America's food and fiber system.

The Texas AgriFood Master Program is sponsored by the AgriFood Education Councils of Texas, the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, The Texas A&M University System Agriculture Program and many food, fiber and forestry professionals and organizations.

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