

Wendy Hamilton



Better Living for Texans - Adult

Brown County
Wendy Hamilton | Extension Agent - BLT

RELEVANCE

Research suggests that SNAP recipients and other limited resource audiences consume diets that are not in agreement with current dietary recommendations, potentially increasing their risk for the development of chronic disease. Food insecurity, obesity, and lack of access to healthy foods are other issues that impact this audience and have strong potential to negatively impact health.

- There are 2,389 recipients in Brown County receiving benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (source: <https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/records-statistics/data-statistics/supplemental-nutritional-assistance-program-snap-statistics>).
- In addition, the incidence of adult obesity is 36% compared to the state of Texas at 34%.
- Adults that are physically inactive are 30% compared to the state of Texas at 27%.
- The quality of the food environment based on the percentage of the population who are low income and do not live close to a grocery store and those without access to a reliable source is 6.6% (On a scale from 0 to 10 with 0 being the worst value).

RESPONSE

The BLT Program is a cooperative endeavor among Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), and the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) of USDA. A component of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), BLT offers food and nutrition education to SNAP recipients, applicants, and other limited resource audiences to help improve their ability to plan and prepare nutritious meals, stretch food dollars, and prepare and store food safely.

The Brown County BLT Program Area Committee identified the following curriculum as an educational approach to address the health issue in the county. The following series were taught in Brown County. Healthy Carbohydrates was taught in Callahan and Mills counties.

- **Walk N Talk** - designed to support one another to establish or increase the habit of regular physical activity. Nutrition messages occur in a discussion format during the chosen exercise. **16** sessions delivered - **8** participants graduated
- **Walk Across Texas!** (Implemented virtually with three events)- Promotes increased physical activity while tracking miles walked for eight weeks. Partnered with Brownwood Senior Citizens Center to encourage more physical activity while also encouraging more socialization by creating a walking club. The agent assisted each week with mileage entry. There were **18** adult participants and **3** teams.
- **A Fresh Start to a Healthier You!** (In-person and on AgriLife Learn) - teach adult participants about nutrition. Emphasis on increasing fruit and vegetable intake, physical activity, food safety, and food resource management. **13** sessions delivered - **16** graduates
- **Healthy Carbohydrates** - promotes a healthful eating pattern to prevent or delay diet-related chronic diseases. **8** sessions delivered - **41** graduates
- **One Shot Sessions** - used to market additional programs or provide specific information. **4** sessions delivered - **77** contacts

VALUE STATEMENT

Better Living for Texans

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Better Living for Texans programs provides community nutrition education to limited resource adults, youth, and children. The Curricula series offered to cover the lifespan and encourage participants to make healthier food choices, plan healthy meals, prepare food safely, increase physical activity, and grow their own vegetables. The benefit of making healthier food choices and adopting a physically active lifestyle play a role in the prevention of many chronic diseases.

6.3%

2,389

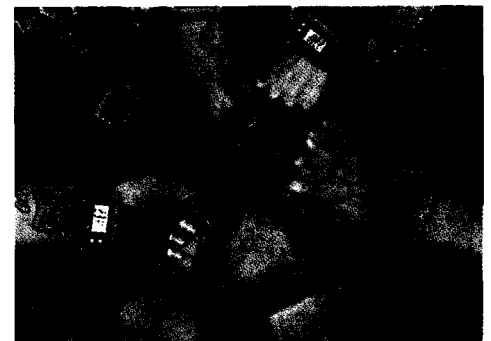
receive SNAP benefits in Brown County

1,769

contacts from presentations

3,372

total contacts were made



The above picture was taken at Christian Women's Job Corp during Walk N Talk.



December 19, 2022 (Exhibit # 6)

RESPONSE

Some of the participants comments were:

Walk N Talk

"My health and outlook on life has improved."

"I have learned how important vegetables and fruits are and how delicious they are in water!"

A Fresh Start to a Healthier You!

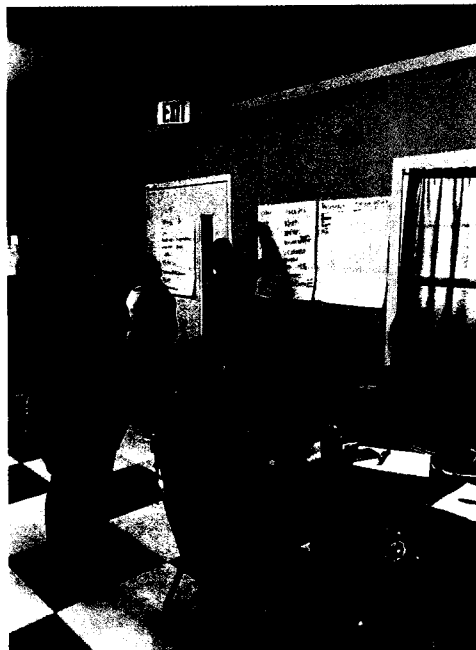
"I have changed the food I eat."

"I wash all my fruits and vegetables now."

Healthy Carbohydrates

"I am doing more physical activity."

"I learned the difference between natural and added sugar and am making healthier food choices because of it."



The above picture was taken at The ARK shelter during Fresh Start to a Healthier You! Participants were meal planning for a day.

EVALUATION STRATEGY

A pre and post-survey was utilized, distributed, and collected for all implemented program series. A total of **76** participants that attended most of the programs and graduated completed the pre and post-survey instrument.

RESULTS

These **76** graduates are divided by the different programs that they attended, and the most significant results are as follows:

- **Walk N Talk** - Percent of participants who participated in moderate or vigorous intensity physical activity or exercise increased from before **75%** to after **100%**. This shows positive behavior change.
- **Walk Across Texas** - **8** out of **18** who met WAT! program goals (104 miles), self-reported they were inactive pre-WAT! The economic impact or savings on future healthcare costs total **\$40,253** if they continue with the same level of physical activity.
- **A Fresh Start to a Healthier You!** - Percent of participants that have **never** used MyPlate to make food choices decreased from **67%** to **3%**. This shows the application of best practices.
- **Healthy Carbohydrates** - Average number of times per day participants eat fruit before **.3** to after **1.7**. This shows positive behavior change.

SUMMARY

Better Living for Texans is only successful because of partnerships in the community.

All series will be offered again in 2023.

Acknowledgements: Thank you to Christian Women's Job Corp, Daybreak Community Services, Cannon Courts Apartments, The ARK shelter, Cross Plains Senior Center, Brown and Mills County Senior Center, as well as Tom Guthrie, Mills County CEA, Karl Winge, Callahan County CEA for agreeing to BLT programming in your counties. Thank you to my BLT committee for their guidance.

FUTURE PROGRAMMING

During the fiscal year 2023, Brown County Better Living for Texans will continue programming at the same locations. However, several partners are interested in Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities gardening curriculum to improve access to fruits and vegetables. In an effort to reach new audiences, programming is scheduled at Salvation Army, public housing, Brown County Housing Solutions, and Center for Life Resources as well.



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RELEVANCE

In Brown County, approximately 21% of children live in poverty. As of November 2022, 1,506 youth (individuals under the age of 17) were eligible to receive benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The SNAP program provides benefits (dollars) each month and enables families to supplement their food budget and diet. Families have an opportunity to shop for a healthier balanced diet; however, when poor eating habits are made an individual's risk of developing chronic diseases like obesity, heart disease, and hypertension increase. Researchers have reported that **few** low-income families consume recommended amounts of whole grains, fruit, and vegetables, and do not meet recommended physical activity requirements. Instead, families **exceed** recommended limits for processed meats, sweets, and sugar-sweetened beverages. Consequently, higher rates of chronic disease are reported among low-income families when compared to higher-income families. High rates of chronic disease raise healthcare costs, and to lower healthcare costs dietary habits and physical activity must be locally addressed. Addressing this need among our youth is critical for preventing a lifetime of negative health consequences. In Brownwood ISD (where this series was taught) out of **3,440** students, **68.69%** are economically disadvantaged.

RESPONSE

Early Childhood Learn, Grow, Eat, and Go! was developed by the Texas A & M AgriLife Extension Service. This curriculum is research-based. During the 20 lessons, the students learned how to start a garden and give plants what they need to grow using a multi-sensory approach.

- The program is a 4-week series that teaches plant and gardening skills, food exposure, and exercise that boosts the brain and body.
- BLT Program Area Committee identified this curriculum as an educational approach to address the community's youth nutrition needs.
- It is specifically designed for 4- and 5-year-old students.

Partnerships

- Brownwood ISD - Heid Gardener, BISD Director of Special Programs
- Head Start staff



VALUE STATEMENT

Better Living for Texans

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Better Living for Texans programs provides community nutrition education to limited resource adults, youth, and children. The Curricula series offered to cover the lifespan and encourage participants to make healthier food choices, plan healthy meals, prepare food safely, increase physical activity, and grow their own vegetables. The benefit of making healthier food choices and adopting a physically active lifestyle play a role in the prevention of many chronic diseases.

15.7%

of the 606 SNAP-eligible children under 5
 were

reached with this program

**95 children
 participated**



Every week, the students learned a new garden song.

(Pictured on the left) the students are learning to dissect flowers.

EARLY CHILDHOOD LGEG

Lessons were provided daily.

- **LEARN** - Students learned what they need to grow, how plants provide for our needs, and how a class can work together to provide for the container garden.
- **GROW** - The students chose their seeds to plant, cared for them and transplanted them in the end with their families.
- **EAT** - On Fridays the students tasted nutrient- dense food growing in their container garden. Together, students described the sensory experience of sampling fresh fruits and vegetables and classroom-friendly Garden Kitchen Recipes they helped prepare.
- **GO** - Throughout the week the students enjoyed the fun as well as the brain and body-boosting benefits of the weekly activities featured in the "GO" activities of the curriculum.
- An **incentive item** to reinforce the lesson each week, and a **newsletter** to educate the parent about the lesson and encourage parent engagement were provided.

EVALUATION STRATEGY

An evaluation instrument was utilized to measure behavior changes. Positive behavior changes were noted in the **95** students by the teachers' feedback results.

RESULTS

5 classroom teachers observed the students over the 4-week period and provided the following feedback:

- **98%** (93 out of 95) of participants were observed to be **more willing to taste fruits** after beginning the program.
- **80%** (76 out of 95) of participants that were observed to be **more willing to taste vegetables** after beginning this program.
- **83%** (79 out of 95) of participants that were observed to **have increased physical activity** after beginning this program.



Just see what a great job these students are doing watering their lettuce, radishes, turnips, and green beans!

OUR GARDEN FAMILY NEWS

STORIES FROM BROWN COUNTY HEAD START EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARN, GROW, EAT & GO PROJECT

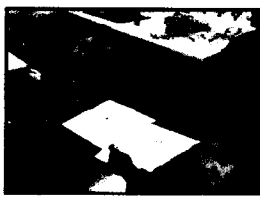
PLANTS YOUR CHILD GROW AT BROWN COUNTY HEAD START

Over the last few weeks, all Head Start classes learned about the parts of the plant and gardening. They used various fruits and vegetables to make recipes and engaged in physically active songs that mimicked the parts of the plant. We probably learned from about the ways and talk about their experiences with the garden at home!

Students grew radishes, lettuce, green beans and tomatoes. During the second week, they put the seeds in the soil. In the end of the week they made sure to water them and put them in the sunlight. Now because of their work, they have small plants, called transplants.

Please take the small plants home and transplant them. Carefully dig a little hole in the garden or flower pot and place the larger container with holes in the bottom. Carefully take the young plant out of its container, and the root ball in the hole, and fill it with soil.

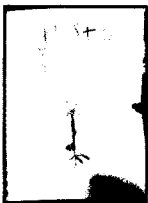
Just make sure to keep the soil slightly moist as the plant grows. In several weeks, your family will get to harvest and enjoy your child's vegetable they grew!



Edible and Inedible Stems and Leaves

Students didn't just talk about plant parts. They determined which were edible and inedible. They differentiated between edible and inedible stems, leaves, and berries in one of the many lessons (pictured above in Mrs. Lopez's class).

In Mrs. Yoder's they journalled about the parts of the plant. Week one was about Plant Needs & Plant Parts. Week 2 they learned about Seeds & Roots. Week 3 they experienced Stems & Leaves. Week 4 the students investigated Flowers & Fruits.



SUMMARY

Better Living for Texans is only successful because of partnerships in the community. Thank you Brownwood ISD Head Start for your partnership and collaboration.

FUTURE PROGRAMMING

The BLT committee advised that Early Childhood LGEG be offered in 2023. The principal at Northwest Elementary in Brownwood ISD has agreed to moving forward with teacher training and program implementation in the spring for Early Childhood Learn, Grow, Eat, & GO!

For more information:
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