

**Regional Team Recognition
Nomination by Alpha Zeta Chapter
Better Living for Texans (BLT)**

TEAM MEMBERS:

Tom LeRoy, CEA Horticulture
Mike Heimer, CEA Ag/NR
Linda R. Mock, CEA FCS
M. Michelle Warren, CEA 4-H
Sheryl A. Nolen, CEA Urban Youth
Lilly Dorney, BLT Program Assistant

NARRATIVE SUMMARY:

For the past six years, Better Living for Texans (BLT) has been meeting the needs of low income families in Montgomery County with integrated/interdisciplinary collaboration of Extension staff reaching over 6000 residents annually through a variety of delivery methods. This team approach for coordinating the BLT program has extended educational out-reach and training to food stamp recipients, child care staff, volunteer groups, after-school programs, and the general public at special events.

The After-School BLT Programing has increased educational out reach significantly. From September 2003 to present, the Montgomery County 4-H and Urban Youth Development program has increased BLT educational out-reach to 4-H After School programs from no existing programs to eleven sites across the county.

The success of the BLT program is the staff's ability to collaborate with other agencies, schools organizations, and churches working to reach limited resource populations. More than 100 volunteers have been trained to assist in conducting nutrition education programs with Interfaith of The Woodlands, Salvation Army, City of Conroe Community Centers, Tamina Community Center, YMCA After-Care, Conroe ISD, Bellshire Apartment residents, Montgomery County Woman's Shelter, Willis HEADSTART, Montgomery County Housing Authority, Montgomery County Food Bank, Montgomery County Homeless Coalition, Master Gardener volunteers and various 4-H and youth groups

PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Montgomery County is a Gold Level BLT Program with total match time of 832 hours annually and is attained by five agents and five support staff. Linda Mock, FCS coordinates BLT working with Lilly Dorney BLT Program Assistant to produce outcomes that impact important health and nutrition issues for low income families. This year, evaluating thirty-seven persons who participated in five different evaluation series where BLT curriculum was used demonstrating the following outcomes on self-report survey instrument:

- ▶ 54% Saved money at the grocery store and plan weekly menus
- ▶ 81% Added more fruits and vegetables to meals
- ▶ 27% Increased intake of milk and other dairy products
- ▶ 100% More aware of how to make healthier choices in snacks and meal preparation
- ▶ 100% More aware of food safety to avoid food poisoning and cross-contamination

Others reported changing behavior to reduce fat intake, giving up donuts after seeing the "fat" models and preparing healthy recipes distributed during the program

Once a year the BLT /JMG Healthy and Nutrition from the Garden Unit Plan with a series of six sequential learning experiences are conducted by Sheryl Nolen, CEA Urban Youth to promote healthy eating habits. Youth and child care staff learn to increase intake of fruits and vegetables, benefits of Vitamin A, C and Fiber, and how to prepare healthy snacks. Programing efforts exceed 144 BLT match hours to reach 1090 youth and 75 child care staff participate in BLT nutrition programs each year. Examples of 4-H After School programs include:

- ◆ Conroe ISD 21st Century at four schools sites serving over 600 under-served youth, over 90% minority and low income
- ◆ Oscar Johnson Center After-School programs serving 50 minority youth identified as low income
- ◆ Tamina Community Center after-school programs serving 40 minority youth identified as low income
- ◆ Conroe YMCA After -Care four sites serving over 400 youth with 51% population identified as low income.

The team members collaborate to market the BLT program at community events and expand educational out-reach.

- ◆ Over past five years, Michelle and Mike Heimer coordinate Kids Day at Montgomery County Fair which is a program that includes BLT Food and Nutrition Track reaching youth and teachers with beef production, milk production, yjr Food Guide Pyramid and the benefits of Vitamin A & C and fiber. This program reach 500 students direct contacts and 800 general public indirect contacts.
- ◆ Sheryl Nolen Agent coordinated events and activities for the Discovery Village at Gullo KidzFest to support BLT program activities, assisted Lily Dorney with exhibits and coordinated 4-H Volunteers to assist with activities for BLT Program reaching 300 youth and adults annually.
- ◆ Michelle Warren 4-H, Sheryl Nolen, aand Linda Mock, work with Lily Dorney to conduct Food Safety Training and interpret BLT to 30 participants annually
- ◆ Michelle Warren, CEA 4-H collaborating with Lilly Dorney over past five years to conduct a series of six sequential lessons focused on character and nutrition reaching over 200 minority low income youth participating in Conroe Parks & Recreation Summer Camp annually
- ◆ Sheryl Nolen and Lilly Dorney BLT Program Assistant has conducted programs collaborating with Montgomery County 4-H Young Entrepreneurs program reaching over 100 youth participating in the Conroe Young Entrepreneurs program with Food Safety and nutrition to prepare Trail Mix for profit.

A teamwork approach has been essential to increasing the volunteer support for the BLT program.

- ◆ Tom LeRoy, CEA Horticulture, coordinating Montgomery County Master Gardeners volunteers donate over 20 hours annually to assist Lilly Dorney with summer youth nutrition programs and match 30 additional hours with other support. Sheryl Nolen has conducted BLT/JMG Health and Nutrition MG volunteer training to involve five members of the MCMG- JMG Leadership Team in programs reaching over 100 youth annually.

The team approach has expand BLT in a multi-county approach including joint programing with Harris, Waller, Walker and Jefferson counties.

- ◆ Sheryl Nolen, and Michelle Warren, CEA 4-H collaborated with Starla Garlic CEA 4-H in Jefferson County to conduct BLT & JMG Cultivating Healthy Kids food and nutrition workshop in Jefferson County reaching 65 youth and 15 adults attended
- ◆ Linda Mock, CEA FCS and Sheryl Nolen conducted BLT/JMG Cultivating Healthy Kids at Montgomery County Child Care Conference reaching 50 child care staff.
- ◆ Sheryl Nolen collaborated with Kathy Gardener to conduct BLT/JMG Cultivating Healthy Kids for Walker County Master Gardeners
- ◆ Sheryl Nolen, Lilly Dorney and Master Gardeners collaborated Harris County to plan BLT/JMG Cultivating Healthy Kids training for Greater Houston YMCA