

**NOMINATION FOR
Chapter Early Career - Individual
is Being Nominated For
Epsilon Sigma Phi, Alpha Zeta Chapter – Texas**



Nominee's Name: Caroline Cruz

Title: County Extension Agent - Urban Youth Development

Address: 9020 Airport Road

City, State Zip: Conroe, Texas 77303

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Phone Number: 936-539-7823

Year Initiated into ESP: 2009

Position and Dates of Extension Employment:

County Extension Agent – Urban Youth Development, Montgomery County
October 29, 2007 to present

Education:

B.S. in Animal Science, Sam Houston State University, 2002

Currently enrolled in Master's Program to obtain Masters of Education at the Graduate School in the College of Education at Prairie View A&M University, Major: Curriculum & Instruction, Program Concentration: Agriculture Education

Outstanding Professional Accomplishments:

2011: Texas Association of 4-H Agents (AE4HA) "Golden Clover"

2011: TAE4-HA Exhibit - Team

2010: TAE4HA Communicator – Published Photo Award

2010: National AE4HA Southern Regional Winner – Communicator Award – Published Photo

2009: TAE4HA Excellence in Camping Team Award and the Diversity Award

2009: NAE4HA Southern Regional Winner – Excellence in Camping Team Award

2009: TAE4HA Diversity Award

2009: Extension Superior Service Team Award – 4-H Kidz with Biz Ideaz State Team

2009-2011: District 9AE4-HA Alternate Director (will serve as Director beginning fall 2011)

2009-2011: District 9AE4HA 2011 State Conference Planning Committee Co-Chair; Hospitality Committee Chair

2010-2011: Attended AE4HA State Association Board Meetings

2010-2011: State AE4HA Association Diversity Committee Chair

2009-2010: State AE4HA Association Diversity Committee Chair-Elect

Outstanding Programmatic Accomplishments:

Montgomery County is an urban initiative county, with Harris County and the Houston metro area to the immediate south of the county. There are just over 300,000 residents in the county and it is the 32nd fastest growing county in the U.S. with some areas still considered rural. There are 1,170 enrolled 4-H members and 21 4-H clubs. There are over 7,700 youth in special interest programs and over 2,200 in school curriculum enrichment programs. In addition there are 13 Junior Master Gardener groups enrolled with almost 300 JMG members. Caroline manages the JMG Leadership Team, which includes herself and 15 Master Gardeners that work to deliver JMG. She co-manages the County Council, the County Youth Board, 4-H After School programs, and Summer Programs with her 4-H co-worker as well as co-supervising the 4-H Secretary and the part time 4-H Program Assistant.

Through Caroline's work the county has met or exceeded most of the 5 year goals for enrollment, special interest, and curriculum enrichment. The largest curriculum enrichment and special interest program is the Junior Master Gardener program with either stand-alone JMG Group registration or through short-term or other enrichment methods. The largest increase has been in official JMG Group registrations with 13 recognized JMG Groups/Clubs in the county. In the past few years, 6 to 10 clubs have registered. In working continually with the JMG Leadership Team and hosting JMG Teacher/Leader Certification classes each August, Caroline has helped to increase the

number of trained adult volunteers that sign up to manage their own JMG groups. She has been able to certify from 20 to 30 new JMG Leaders each August.

Other accomplishments Caroline has achieved:

- Became a National Junior Master Gardener Specialist, which is the highest level of educational leadership for the JMG Program. Being a JMG Specialist will even further strengthen the already high-performing JMG program.
- Began a county-wide JMG project club so youth already enrolled in 4-H can have the JMG project experience.
- Began a county-wide Tech Team (now the SET & Robotics Project) open to any 4-H or non 4-H youth that wants to learn about Lego robotics, science, technology, and discovering the scientific method.
- Part of the state 4-H Robotics grant, which will allow the start a new 4-H Club focusing on robotics, collaborating with the City Parks and Recreation Department to start this new club at one of the after school program sites this fall.
- Started developing plans and securing grants for new JMG Children's Discovery Garden at the Extension office. The garden is currently under construction and will hopefully open by this fall. This will serve as education for children and for teachers.
- Grew new program areas such as Food Challenge and new Fashion Story Board projects with assistance from co-workers.
- Held a "Take A Stand" Teacher Certification in January 2011 and certified 17 educators to deliver the program. The largest school District, Conroe ISD, is typically resistant to Extension programs especially at the high school level; however Caroline trained 5 staff from Conroe High School as part of this group. The Conroe High School group included the Assistant Principal and 2 counselors, as well as the District-wide Hispanic Task Force staff.
- Hosted National Youth Science Day 2009 –130 youth from 1 Conroe ISD intermediate campus participate. Then hosted National Youth Science Day 2010 – In one year the program grew from 130 to 935 youth from 7 Conroe ISD campuses and after school programs. Trained several teachers and afterschool program providers in how to teach the "4-H2O" experiment. Funds won from the previous year were used to purchase enough supplies for all 935 youth to participate. This is almost a 720% increase in one year.
- Held a "Literature in the Garden" JMG Program at the county library for the first time. Taught 17 youth and 4 adults about carnivorous plants in southeast Texas, plant growth and development.
- Led the county Youth In Action Adopt-A-Spot Program to win the Keep Texas Beautiful Ruthe Jackson Youth 2nd Place Award; Texas Recreation and Parks Society Community Sponsor Award, and Texas JMG County Program Award.
- Revived the County Youth Board by collaborating with the City Parks and Recreation Department and their new Teen Court initiative. Also worked with the Hispanic Task Force of our largest school district to involve the youth from their high school programs.
- Co-coordinated the Kidz Biz with Ideaz designed to reach urban, low income, at-risk minority youth ages 11 to 13 through a series of competency building entrepreneurship enrichment activities provided during afterschool hours and to address the need for trained staff by implementing a 4-H Afterschool Teen Teacher/Mentor Training Program therein developing life and leadership skills of teen teachers Collaborations between Extension, Conroe ISD 21st CCLC improved the quality of academic enrichment programs delivered to over 350 under-served, low income minority youth from high risk communities. Youth and adult partnerships were developed to train a bi-lingual team of ten teens to teach afterschool sessions with the support of site staff. The support for the YEP 4-H After School program increased over the years. In 2007 a total of 71 youth, 10 adult staff, 19 4-H Teen Teachers, and 3 Extension staff participated over 25 weeks.

Support Statement (approximately 75 words): Caroline Cruz is an asset to our agency. Her desire to be a 4-H agent led her to leave the security of a full time job with benefits to take a county program assistant position to get her foot in the door. She never looked back. Her first four years as an Extension Agent have been chocked full of progress. She has enriched the program in Montgomery County, District 9 and the state of Texas.