



Maricopa County Cooperative Extension

IMPROVING LIVES, COMMUNITIES,
AND THE ECONOMY

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Issue #



University of Arizona-Roosevelt Early Childhood Family Resource Center Keeps Reaching Out

By Patty Merk

On December 12 and 18th, a total of 174 families that include 615 children participated in a drive-through holiday gift-giving event. As part of the University of Arizona-Roosevelt Early Childhood Family Resource Center's community outreach in South Phoenix, faculty and staff organized and coordinated a way for this annual event to be held in keeping with COVID-19 protocols.

The gift-giving to families whose children would not otherwise have received toys and books was accomplished with financial and in-kind assistance from United Healthcare, Walmart, Charles Schwab, South Mountain-Laveen Festival Committee, Prince Hall Masons, author Sharon Penchina, UArizona Cooperative Extension-Maricopa County office faculty/staff and other individual contributors.

The family resource team includes Extension Agent, Patty Merk and staff: Ginamarie Nieves, Tamara Floyd, Kathleen Tapia, Yahaira Campana, Gloria Gomez and Hadeel Aborached. Stephanie Wiersma of United Healthcare wrote, "We are so happy to be involved in helping you reach our communities this year and in 2021."



The Diabetes Prevention Program at The UA Maricopa County Cooperative Extension

By Traci Armstrong Florian, MS, RDN, Associate Agent, FCHS

In the US, approximately 30.3 million people have type 2 diabetes (T2D), a condition that affects the way the body metabolizes blood sugar, in that the body either does not produce enough insulin or it resists the insulin it produces causing blood sugar to rise to dangerous and damaging levels. T2D has an annual cost estimated to be \$327 billion a year. Although, type 2 diabetes is not reversible, prediabetes is. Prediabetes is a condition in which blood glucose levels are high, but not high enough to be T2D. It affects approximately 84.1 million Americans, and is a condition, when left untreated, may become T2D.

The CDC's Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) is an evidence-based intervention shown to reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes by 58%, through education, behavior change, weight loss, and physical activity. Non-Extension entities attempting to implement the DPP have had recurring challenges such as:

- ♦ Participant reach, especially in rural areas,
- ♦ Participant recruitment and retention, and
- ♦ Long-term financial sustainability of implementation.

Cooperative Extension (CE) is well positioned to address the common challenges reported with the real-world implementation of the DPP and can achieve a broader population health impact. This position in the community eliminates the challenges other organizations have faced in program implementation and builds on CE's strengths. The Maricopa County Extension office, like in many counties in the US, has strong community partnerships, and a long history of delivering nutrition and health education to the community. Additionally, to improve participant retention and outcomes, CE is able to offer participants additional CE programming to complement and supplement the DPP, such as EFNEP (Extension Food and Nutrition Education Program) and SNAP-Ed, (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education) to name a few.

In 2018, Vanessa da Silva, PhD, RDN, Nutrition Extension Specialist in the Department

of Nutritional Sciences brought the DPP to the UA Cooperative Extension system. This author, along with Janel Rogers, EFNEP educator at the UA Maricopa County Cooperative, started implementing the DPP in October 2018 and graduated our first cohort in 2019.

The Diabetes Prevention Program is a year-long program with 26 lessons spread throughout the year. Lessons include nutrition and physical activity basics as well as subjects regarding managing stress, coping with triggers, taking charge of negative thinking, and getting support from loved ones.

The goals for participants are:

- ◆ 5% body weight loss and
- ◆ 150 minutes of physical activity each week.

Our current cohort, the first exclusively online DPP class at MCCE, is a wonderful group of very motivated individuals that are continually brave at trying new, healthy foods, strengthening exercise habits, and building skills for long-term success.

One of our stars is a person that has lost 29 pounds since August's start of the DPP and now averages 215 minutes of physical activity a week!

Another star participant has lost 18 pounds since August and has incrementally increased their weekly physical activity—no small feat for this busy person!

There are many, many more stars shining in our class. We are so proud of them! The Diabetes Prevention Program is a rewarding program (for participants and those of us that facilitate and teach) and it changes peoples' health trajectories and quality of life for the rest of their lives.



Virtual Tours

By Gigett Aja Webb

What do you do during a pandemic and want to teach students about agriculture in their daily lives? Make lemonade! Well, not really, but we can teach students about how

citrus and Christmas trees are grown.

The Oregon Ag in the Classroom program recently partnered with the UArizona Agricultural Literacy & STEM Education program to bring agriculture literacy via Zoom to over 4,300 students. More virtual tours will be coming in the new year.

Please email gigettewebb@arizona.edu if you would like to receive more information about the virtual ag tours.



Class 29 meets online during the "State Budget Basics: Corrections, Education & Healthcare" Seminar with Vail School District.

Project CENTRL

By Scott Koeing

If 2020 has taught us anything, it is that we need leaders now more than ever. Fifteen leaders from across rural Arizona were selected into Class 29; meet them at www.centrl.org/Class29. They've been actively participating in their leadership development journey, most recently learning about the three largest parts of the state budget: corrections, healthcare and education. In January 2021 they will interact with legislators and state leadership and in February 2021; they will learn about the winter leafy green capital of the US: Yuma!

Several of our over 650 alumni have been active across the state with several running campaigns in the fall for local, county and state-wide offices. Congratulations to Joel John, Class 22 for winning his first election in LD4 and joining six other alumni already serving in the State Legislature beginning in 2021.

We are actively recruiting for Class 30 and the application deadline is March 15, 2021 and materials can be found at www.centrl.org/apply.



Discovery 4-H Garden

By Emilio

Since October of this year, Discovery 4-H has been working on our new gardening project at the area the Maricopa County Extension gave us to use. We planted lots of interesting plants and we are still taking care of it.

The first time that we went, we started bringing compost, we mixed and soaked dirt with some new supplies that we got, and we decided what to plant and where to plant it

(using our heads). The next time, we actually mixed the compost, (and found a lizard in there :)) and we planted a lot of different items including oregano, carrots, poppies, cilantro, kale, tomatoes, peppers, and a whole bunch of other healthy things. And all the other times were times of watering and progress checks.

We are doing the garden because it's a fun thing to do and it shows us all how to do farm work and it teaches us independence because of all the different tasks there are. It also encourages us to try new foods because they grew the plants themselves (which is very healthy). And another thing, there has been a big increase in gardens since Covid-19, for example: in Russia, demand for seeds rose by 20%-30% year-on-year in March. And at Johnny's Selected Seeds in Fairfield, Maine, saw a 270% jump in orders the week of March 16. We are some of the many who have chosen gardening but for us, as a project! We are also using our hands to work on our marvelous oasis and together in there, we are using our hearts.

To come to an end, I would say that we have made great progress and gotten some pretty cool things into our garden.

References: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-gardens-idUSKBN2220D3>

Master Gardener DIG Class Sees Big Rise in Attendanc

By Michael Chamberland

The Desert Institute of Gardening (DIG) class series, offered by the Maricopa County Master Gardener Program, is a

prominent instrument of outreach to the gardening public.

Prior to 2020, all DIG classes had been held as in-person events and were constrained by the occupancy limits of the space where the class was held. The response to COVID-19, and the need for social distancing, propelled a quick shift to an online format for DIG classes.

The Zoom platform was utilized. While 2019 and 2020 both featured the same number of classes (17), the number of attendees more than doubled, from 648 in 2019 to 1570 in 2020. Net revenue from admissions to the DIG class series was also up in 2020, even after the standard ticket price had been halved, a measure to encourage attendance to the new format and to make gardening information more accessible during these uncertain times.

A donation ticket option was also added for any who self-identified as unable to meet the new reduced ticket price. Another new feature for DIG has been Zoom breakout-rooms managed by Master Gardeners. This has facilitated a more personalized session of questions and answers following the main DIG presentation.



Turfgrass Science Extension Progra

By Kai Umeda

Despite the COVID-19 chaos and a very droughty 2020, turfgrasses along with weeds and insect pests still flourished and required management on essential golf courses, sports fields, parks, and landscapes.

Weeds that were not previously identified as problems cropped up and prompted investigations to determine new control strategies including evaluating herbicide options.



Turf managers, municipalities, and homeowners are seeking safe, alternative, nonconventional means of controlling weeds. To that end, several herbicides of natural product origins (eg. vinegar, citric acid + clove oil, eugenol + molasses, d-limonene, long-chain fatty acids) were compared in multiple experiments last winter/spring.

Speaking of the drought, turf areas targeted for removal can install alternative planting materials that could use less water with fewer maintenance inputs. Kurapia is a drought

and cold tolerant new groundcover that has potential to fit in desert landscapes (photo). Replacing turfgrasses, nativegrasses can be seeded and use less water and fertilizers and require less mowing.

Outreach education was all virtual and provided clientele opportunities to obtain continuing education to maintain professional licensing requirements.



Zoom Fests are the Best!

By Julie Hastings

Anything but dull, the new Arizona Water Festival online “Celebration of Learning” has taken students from being zoned out to Zoomed in! At a recent online Celebration, giggling and squiggling students could be seen anxiously awaiting to learn about the wonders of

water from local water professionals.

“Oo’s” and “ah’s” could be heard as Magician Richard Steel, Master of Ceremonies, wowed students with tricks and offered tips on how to save water. These innovative changes came about when in person gatherings were put on hold this past spring and the Arizona Project WET Water Festival team took the program virtual.

The traditional Arizona Water Festival (AWF) Program was dramatically changed to provide valuable support to teachers who find themselves teaching online. The 10-lesson curriculum unit was modified to allow teachers to facilitate the lessons whether they are in a classroom setting or if their students are learning remotely. The team rethought each of the lessons and created videos and online activities. They also came up with some creative lessons that students can do from home using just a few things from around the house. Students still do hands on experiments no matter where they are. The water festival event activities were turned into online learning modules that include a formative assessment and a live Virtual Celebration of Learning is taking place at the end of the unit to recreate the essence of the festival.

While this has been a year of uncertainty and change, the AWF team continues to bring quality water education to Arizona 4th grade students. Now in an exciting new way!

Check out more information on our website: <https://awf.projectwet.arizona.edu/>



We are saddened to announce the passing of Terry Mikel, retired Horticulture Agent at Maricopa County Cooperative Extension. Those of you who knew Terry remember his great sense of humor, his love of plants, and his ability to turn a handful of weeds into a super salad! But Terry was also a loving son, brother, father, and grandfather. Our prayers and thoughts are with his family. Due to Covid-19, the family is preparing for memorial services later in 2021.



Directors Cut

By Ed Martin

2020 will undoubtedly be remembered for many things. However, one bright spot for me was our office's ability to pivot and continue to deliver quality Extension programs amidst a pandemic and University requirements on social distancing. During much of 2020, our programming was either virtual or limited in the number of people who could gather in one place. To address this, our staff transitioned to online learning, virtual workshops, and virtual field days.

Our 4-H team was challenged to keep our youth engaged in 4-H in an online format. Much of our programming was canceled or postponed, but our staff worked through the challenges and provided opportunities for the youth to continue their 4-H experiences and learning. In our IPM/Field Crops program, our team became experts in live streaming, allowing growers to visit agricultural fields virtually through the internet and addressing pressing issues within our agricultural community.

Our horticulture and Master Gardener programs went 100% online. With the help of some very dedicated volunteers, we had a very successful Master Gardener class. Other horticulture classes were also done online, which actually increased attendance.

Our Agricultural Literacy and STEM program collaborated with Oregon State University Extension and held a virtual class that highlighted an Arizona citrus farm and an Oregon Christmas Tree farm. The Pesticide Safety Education program continued with online courses, ensuring that the state's professional applicators were up-to-date in the latest research and safety information.

Our SNAP-Ed and EFNEP programs also worked to transition their program to an online format, as did our Turf Grass Science program. Smartscape and Arizona Project WET both went to a virtual mode and continued to help educate teachers and landscape professionals about the importance of water conservation in Arizona. Our Family Resource Center went to an online format and still found time to have a food drive for Thanksgiving and a gift drive for Christmas.

Given all the challenges, all the Zoom meetings, all the technical glitches, and so many frozen screens, I believe our office has done an exceptional job of providing educational opportunities for the people of Maricopa County and beyond. We are all hopeful that our -in-person programming will back in place in 2021. However, for many programs, I think a hybrid format will be used in the future where participants can come to the office to participate or, if more convenient, get online at home and take advantage of the excellent programs offered by Maricopa County Cooperative Extension.

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