

## Students begin spring garden program



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Extension Agent

On Feb. 11-12, youth from three Rusk County Schools participated in the kickoff of the 10-week Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Program — Learn, Grow, Eat and Go by being involved in the planting of their spring garden.

During the kickoff, students from Laneville ISD third and fourth grade classes, Full Armor Christian Academy third and fourth grade classes, and Leverett's Chapel ISD third grade class, prepared soil and planted bush peas, snow peas, broccoli, purple dragon carrots, Swiss chard, black nebular carrots, kohlrabi, white cauliflower, amarillo carrots, beets, radishes, green choy, bok choy, red cabbage, green cabbage, tomatoes, bell pepper, jalapeno pepper, straight neck squash, kale, collard greens, mint, rosemary and marigolds in the school's raised garden beds.

At each school, the program meets twice a week for a total of 20 lessons, and the program is divided into four components.

The LEARN component focuses on working with the students in the classroom setting with the corresponding curriculum utilizing science and math skills while learning about growing vegetables.

The GROW component is the actual participation in growing a vegetable garden.

The EAT component is the nutrition component and focuses on teaching the nutritional value of foods and of the foods that are being grown.

The GO component has to do with the importance of physical activity and relates to the exercise the students receive by getting outside, by weeding the garden, watering, and working the garden each day.

The interactive and fun classroom instruction and activities that complement the garden project are led by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension-Rusk County, members of the Rusk County L.E.A.N. Coalition, and members of the Rusk County Master Gardeners.

The following have served as teachers during the first four weeks of the program: from Rusk County L.E.A.N. Coalition: James Pike, Judy Stokes, Mandy Watson, Della Mendez, Liz Buckner-County Extension Agent-FCH; from Rusk County Master Gardeners Michelle Jackson, Becky Rountree, Benny Rountree, Rena Jordan, Lynn Tieken, Marcia Best, Melba Wilkerson and Linda McCauley.

The program has the support of the classroom teachers: Jimmie Zoltz and Reta Dunlap of Laneville Elementary; Jamie Blanton of Leverett's Chapel Elementary; and Katie Prior and Heather Holland of FACA.

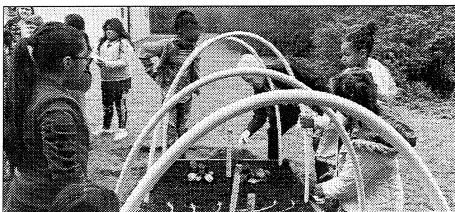
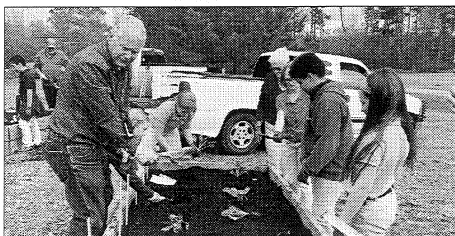
The LGEG program attempts to help address health issues such as obesity and diabetes that affect millions of Texans, and it combines academics with gardening, nutrition-oriented food experiences, physical activity and group engagement. In a fast paced world where more and more people think food comes from the grocery store, teaching these youth about where their food comes from, how it is grown, how it helps them to grow and be healthy is a good thing, and hopefully will plant the seed of "gardening" as something that can be enjoyed for a lifetime.

This marks the third year of LGEG in Rusk County, and in 2018 our Rusk County "Learn, Grow, Eat, & Go!" group was honored at the National Extension Association for Family and Consumer Sciences 84th annual session in San Antonio with nine awards.

The theme of the session was "Building Capacity Through People, Programs and Partner-

ships," and Buckner and the Rusk County LGEG group were team member recipients of the following award honors:

- Texas Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences — Family Health and Wellness Award — 1st place
- TEAFCS — School Wellness Award — 1st place;
- TEAFCS — Environmental Education Award — 1st place;
- National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences — Southern Region School Wellness Award — 1st place;
- NEAFCS — Southern Region School SNAP-ED/EFNEP Educational Program Award — 1st place;
- NEAFCS — Southern Region School Environmental Education Award — 1st place;
- NEAFCS — Environmental Education Award — 2nd place;
- NEAFCS — SNAP-ED/EFNEP Educational Program Award — 1st place; and
- NEAFCS — School Wellness Award — 1st place.



*Courtesy photos*

Bennie Rountree, James Pike and Linda McCauley helped third and fourth grade students (top) on planting day Feb. 11. Rusk County L.E.A.N. Coalition members with Leverett's Chapel third graders (center) following LGEG on My Plate. Lynn Tieken helping Laneville LGEG third and fourth graders (bottom) on their planting day Feb. 11.