

Housing and the Home Environment

<http://fcs.tamu.edu/housing/index.php>

The Housing and Environment Program of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service addresses issues that affect the health, safety, and well being of families in their living environment.

Relevance

Each year, we are faced with many challenges and opportunities. Among the many housing and environmental issues or concerns that require our attention are:

- escalating energy costs, the need to reintroduce energy use and conservation, and alternative energy sources;
- disturbingly high rates of home foreclosures, and the need to educate present and future home owners about housing finance;
- environmentally friendly and healthy housing issues – especially regarding lead, radon, carbon monoxide, mold, safe homes, and building disaster-resistant housing;
- the aging of our population and their special housing needs, plus the aging of our housing and infrastructure; and
- the increasing population growth, increasing demand for water, and the need to reduce consumption.

Response

To address these issues, the Housing and Environment Program has developed a website, conducts public information and education programs, and facilitates training



opportunities for county Extension agents (CEAs) that equip them with information, educational materials, visuals, and tool kits for providing educational programs, media events, etc. A statewide housing specialist is available to provide support for CEAs as they have questions related to housing.

To address the issue of where one lives and how to buy a home, AgriLife Extension has an on-line course where consumers can gather information about managing money, renting, buying, building, and home maintenance. Located under the title “House and Home,” the course is found at <http://extensiononline.tamu.edu/>. An online course “Are You Ready to Buy a House?” is in development.

To address water management issues, a checklist, web links to credible resources, and numerous fact sheets are available on the FCS website (<http://fcs.tamu.edu>). Teaching presentations are available on the FCS agent-only website (accessed through the FCS website). Demonstration models and flip charts are available for teaching clientele how to make simple toilet and faucet repairs. By contacting the housing specialist, a water conservation demonstration kit and other educational resources are available.

The accessible living program focuses on keeping baby boomers and older adults safe and independent at they age. An “Easy Living Kit,” containing adaptative devices, is available in each district office. A PowerPoint® presentation to accompany the kit or substitute for the kit is available on the agent-only website. Publications are available on the FCS website or from the Texas AgriLife Extension Bookstore (<http://agrilifebookstore.org/>).

Healthy Indoor Air is a consumer education program concerned with improving the quality of indoor air in homes. Topics include: radon,

moisture and biological, carbon monoxide, household products and furnishings, asbestos, lead, formaldehyde, secondhand smoke, and asthma and allergy triggers (www.healthyindoorair.org). AgriLife Extension has additional fact sheets relating to indoor air posted on the FCS website (<http://fcs.tamu.edu>).

Healthy Homes is a consumer education program addressing the health and safety needs of children, including: air quality, drinking water, pesticides, and safety. Visit http://www.hud.gov/offices/lead/library/hhi/HYHH_Booklet.pdf for a self-help booklet for parents and caregivers. A limited supply of booklets are available from the Extension housing specialist. Fact sheets and presentations are available at http://fcs.tamu.edu/housing/healthy_homes/healthyhomes.php. A recorded training is available for CEAs on Centra.

Energy education programs and resources developed by AgriLife Extension focus on the benefits of high-performance homes, the Energy Star Program, windows, lighting, and building materials. Energy conservation tips are provided to consumers via the Energy Saver booklet and other fact sheets posted on the FCS website (<http://fcs.tamu.edu>). A national Home Energy Community of Practice is in development. Resources will be posted on eXtension to connect consumers with experts in Home Energy (<http://www.extension.org/>).

Results

- Home Buying Process on-line course – 148 individuals have completed this course; 102 are currently enrolled. USDA Rural Development in Texas accepts the certificate of completion from this course to meet the loan requirement of home buyer education (requires a post test prior to getting the certificate).
- 107,828 visitors came to the Texas Experience pavilion at the San Antonio Livestock Show. The Texas AgriLife Extension Service pavilion provided exhibits, displays, and materials to drive home the message of environmental stewardship, including the need to conserve energy, water, and other natural resources.
- In a Home Water Conservation demonstration project, results indicated that participants reduced water consumption by 36 percent by implementing behavior changes and by using equipment more efficiently. Additionally, the study showed that education on ways to conserve water was most effective. The study compared three interventions: education alone; education and water audit; and education, water audit, and retrofitting (toilets, shower heads, and aerators).
- 801 publications related to Accessible Living were downloaded from the Texas AgriLife Extension Bookstore.
- 845 publications related to Healthy Homes, specifically mold, were downloaded from the Texas AgriLife Extension Bookstore.

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