

Ag Matters



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE ★ COMMISSIONER SID MILLER



November 2016

Commissioner's Corner: Celebrating Our Roots Through Family Land Heritage



It's that time of year again — it's Family Land Heritage time in Austin. My team and I at the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) are excited to celebrate the hardworking individuals who are part of this year's Family Land Heritage Ceremony. This **Thursday, November 3**, we will honor more than 40 families whose farms and ranches have been in agricultural operation for 100 years or more.

Family Land Heritage started back in 1974 and is a time-honored tradition for us here at TDA. We enjoy commemorating the families who have passed down their love of agriculture from generation-to-generation at this ceremony at our State Capitol.

You've probably heard me say *Texas Agriculture Matters* a time or two, and Family Land Heritage is just one of the many ways that we honor the farmers and ranchers who make this statement true. It's important for us to remember our agricultural roots, as they are the foundation that will lead us into the future. With folks like our Family Land Heritage honorees, I have full confidence that we will be able to meet world demand from the agriculture industry.

Your servant,

Sid Miller

TDA Announces First GROW Award Winner of 2016



Commissioner Miller announced the winner of TDA's first GROW award of the year just last month, so please join us in congratulating Baillie McManners, a senior from Caney Creek High School, as the October 2016 GROW winner.

The GROW award **G**ives **R**ecognition for **O**utstanding **W**ork to middle and high school students who demonstrate leadership and excellence inside and outside the classroom. Baillie was the perfect choice, as she demonstrates excellence with her leadership roles and activities, community service and agricultural involvement.

"I'd like to say how proud I am of Baillie for earning this month's GROW award," Commissioner Miller said. "Young Texans like her make me hopeful for the future of our great state. She's got the talent and the drive to succeed that has been fueling success in Texas for hundreds of years. Way to go, Baillie!"

Baillie raises and shows Santa Gertrudis cattle with her family. She is also currently serving as her FFA chapter's president and area first vice president. She also manages a producing apiary, runs a small taxidermy business and serves on the Montgomery County Fair's special education committee as a junior committee member.

"It is such an honor to be selected by the Texas Department of Agriculture as a GROW award recipient," said McManners. "It's been my goal to serve others while promoting the agriculture industry, and through my FFA and SAE experiences, I have the opportunity to begin this journey."

Read more about Baillie's achievements [here](#). A new student will receive the GROW award each month throughout the school year. To nominate a promising young student in your area, click [here](#).

Spotlight: Healthy Community Network

Every day, the Food and Nutrition team at TDA works to help feed the hungry and promote a healthy lifestyle for Texans of all ages. One way TDA is doing just that is through our Healthy Community Network (HCN).

HCN works to connect community leaders throughout the state who promote positive health and wellness within their communities. These leaders have joined together to reduce hunger, prevent obesity and promote wellness throughout their communities. They are doing great work, and TDA is proud to support them in their endeavors to make the Lone Star State a healthier place to live.

Every day, these inspiring leaders are providing the resources to ensure that everyone has the tools to embrace TDA's 3E's of Healthy Living - Education, Exercise and Eating Right! One HCN participant, Mayor Roger Van Horn from Nacogdoches, prides himself on his life's work to help people in his community be healthy.

"As mayor, I am proud to continue to work toward a healthy community in Nacogdoches and create a city where people find health accessible and attainable," said Mayor Van Horn.

Click here for a [list](#) of participating local officials from Pasadena to Cuero and everywhere in between. For more information on HCN and how your community can get involved, click [here](#).

Partnership Allows Hunters to Help The Hungry



With Thanksgiving right around the corner, it's the perfect time of year to talk about the statewide Hunters for the Hungry program. This organization has provided more than nine million servings of venison to Texans in need. The Hunters for the Hungry program is a partnership between Feeding Texas, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and local meat processors. This program has been around for more than 20 years and allows those in need to find food assistance through local charities and local food banks.

During the hunting season, hunters can donate legally tagged deer to participating meat processors. After the hunters donate the venison and pay a nominal fee, the participating meat processors cut up and package the meat. Then, local food assistance providers distribute it to those in need.

It's a partnership that's working together to help fellow Texans, and with deer season about to open, this is the perfect time to consider participating in Hunters for the Hungry. Want to know how you can get involved? Click [here](#).

ICYMI: TDA Receives Grant For Trade Expansion



Last month, TDA accepted a grant for \$800,000 from the U.S. Small Business Administration Office of International Trade for the State Trade Expansion Program (STEP). TDA plans to use these funds to expand the export-related activities of small businesses in Texas and increase export dollars earned by those companies.

TDA Deputy Agriculture Commissioner Jason Fearneyhough accepted the award during a check presentation October 17.

"This is a huge boost for any small business in Texas ready to expand to the international market," Fearneyhough said. "If you're ready to sell to the world, then the Texas Department of Agriculture is ready to help. Come talk with us."

For additional information on STEP, contact [Denise Rodgers](#) in TDA's Grants Office.

Record-Breaking Participation in Local Products Challenge



The results are in, and we're celebrating the record-breaking participation in this year's Local Products Challenge. That means we succeeded in ensuring more Texas children learn about eating healthy Texas foods and are enjoying lunch at school. With 145 school districts and charter schools incorporating Texas products into October menus — that represents more than 2 million students gaining some exposure to the benefits of eating local foods — there's no doubt that the Local Products Challenge was a success.

Even more school districts, 162 in fact, celebrated National School Lunch Week in October using the theme "Vote for a Winning Lunch." TDA provided 2,237 ballot boxes and more than 1 million ballots that students could use to choose a winning lunch. At Judson ISD, the child nutrition department sent candidates Mr. Cookie and Ms. Sandwich to schools to encourage children to cast their ballot for a winning school lunch. It was all about getting students involved in eating nutritious foods for a healthy life.

Also during October, TDA facilitated visits from professional chefs at schools around the state. You can read about Chef Mark Schneider's visit to Bangs High School where he introduced students to Texas products in the [Brownwood Bulletin](#).

This month, TDA will keep the excitement going by recognizing participants and sharing the many more success stories from schools across the Lone Star State. Stay tuned!

Christmas Tree Farms Gearing up For The Holiday Season

The holiday season is rapidly approaching, and TDA's GO TEXAN program is proud to support the time-honored tradition of selecting and buying a Christmas tree each year. There are many GO TEXAN member Christmas tree farms across the Lone Star State. These farms not only have the perfect Christmas trees, they also provide a fun experience for the whole family. In addition to pumpkin patches and hayrides in October and November, most of these farms open up for Christmas trees right after the Thanksgiving holiday. You can pick out the perfect tree for your family's holiday celebration.

"As it gets closer to Christmas, I encourage all Texans to visit a Texas Christmas tree farm near them to support Texas agriculture and make memories that will last a lifetime," Commissioner Miller said.

To find your local Christmas tree farm, click [here](#).

Community Development Grants Aid Rural Texas

More than \$42 million was granted to rural Texas communities for critically needed infrastructure improvements last month. These federal funds are administered through TDA's Texas Community Development Block Grant (TxCDBG) program to support vibrant communities, suitable living conditions and expand economic opportunities in rural Texas.

Commissioner Sid Miller believes that rural communities work very hard to provide a great place for people to live, work and raise their families.

"Some smaller Texas communities can't financially support the kind of large public works projects that will improve and strengthen their local quality of life," Commissioner Miller said. "That's where the Texas Department of Agriculture helps by making sure that rural Texas has equal access to federal funding available for these kinds of improvements. Together, the Texas Department of Agriculture and rural communities across the state are ensuring all Texans have a safe place to live."

View a list of the communities that recently received CDBG grants by clicking [here](#).

